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THE

MISSION OF ST. FRANCIS OF SALES

IN THE CHABLAIS.

THE MISSION OF

ST. FRANCIS OF SALES

IN THE CHABLAIS.

BY

LADY HERBERT.

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TO

THE REVEREND JOHN EDWARD BOWDEN,

PRIEST OF THE LONDON ORATORY,

These pages are humbly and affectionately inscribed.

PREFACE.

THE writer of the following pages had two motives in view,—the one to make known more widely among English readers this episode in the life of that apostle of charity, St. Francis of Sales; the other, to show the wonderful parallel between the spiritual condition of the Chablais and of England in the sixteenth century.

In both countries the iron heel of the civil power succeeded in crushing out the Catholic faith, and establishing heresy as the law of the land. And in both the sacred flame of truth

was kept alive by the fidelity of a few faithful hearts, who, in spite of persecution and martyrdom and the loss of goods and lands and all that men hold most dear, maintained the good seed which was afterwards to spring up and bear fruit a hundredfold.

And now, as in the Chablais so in England, a brighter day has dawned; the age of penal laws and religious persecutions is wellnigh past. Once more on countless altars the Holy Sacrifice is daily offered; and that, not in secret hiding-place or in chapels behind carefully concealed panels, but in the centre of London and in open day.

Once more, noble bands of men and women are congregating in convent homes to teach the ignorant, to nurse the sick, to rescue the fallen, to train priests for the sanctuary, to lift up holy hands unceasingly for a blessing on our land.

And now, in this season of Lent, our venerable

Archbishop, following in the footsteps of his predecessors, has again inaugurated the "Forty Hours" throughout his diocese; so that in each church as the tapers flicker and die out, "wasting with love like human souls" before the Tabernacle, their flame may be renewed in continual succession, and countless worshippers be brought to the feet of their Lord. Veiled in the Sacred Species, out of the very depths of His unfathomable humility, marvellous are the conquests of our King in the Blessed Sacrament, carrying by storm, as it were, the very hearts of men.

"I have greater faith in *that* than in all our toil," exclaimed St. Francis when the first "Exposition" was permitted at Annemasse.

And so let us take heart and labour each in our sphere, however humble, for this great end. True, the evil in England is more deeply rooted. For three hundred years the influence

of a hostile Legislature, and still more of a purely heretical press and literature, has sapped the very foundation of truth in the minds of our people, so that our children suck in prejudice and error with their mother's milk. But stronger is He that is for us than all the powers of men and hell. Only let us be patient and faithful,—patient with hard words and bitter insinuations; patient with those who, yearning after Catholic truth, have made to themselves an imitation which they flatter themselves is the reality; and faithful to our own principles, not swerving a hair's-breadth from the clear, straightforward path, or yielding aught to expediency or human respect; yet still maintaining towards others that gentle, tender, loving charity, which, more than any other quality, won for St. Francis the conversion of his country.

And so shall we gladden the heart of our Holy Father, to whom the conversion of Eng-

land (as to his predecessor, the great St. Gregory) is the object of such continual thought and care and prayer.

And so may England, not in our day, perhaps, but in our children's, return to the unity of the Faith in the fold of the One Great Shepherd, and again deserve her glorious name of the "Island of Saints."

WILTON HOUSE,
March, 1867.

THE MISSION OF

ST. FRANCIS OF SALES

IN THE CHABLAIS.

It was on the 14th September, 1836, on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, that a large body of people of every class, with a venerable bishop at their head, were seen wending their way to a newly-restored chapel on the summit of a hill overlooking the whole surrounding country in a rich and fertile portion of Savoy, in the province called the Chablais, and about a league from the town of Thonon. This chapel was that of the old fortress of Allinges, of which the venerable and battered walls still remained to testify to its ancient strength and importance.

But not for reasons of historical interest alone was that crowd assembling. They came to consecrate anew to the glory of God and the service

of His Church that which was the cradle of the great mission undertaken by the saint-like Bishop of Geneva, St. Francis of Sales, for the rescue of those whom heresy, aided by brute force, had torn from the fold of Christ. Strange and eventful is the history of that sanctuary. The castle of which it formed a part was destroyed by order of the Savoy Princes about the beginning of the eighteenth century; but the chapel was left untouched, and so it remained till the time of the French Revolution, when workmen were sent to carry out there, as elsewhere, the destruction of all that spoke to man of God and of His faith. But the influences of the place, and perhaps the pious training of their boyhood, were too strong for these men, and they left their work undone. Overwhelmed with reproaches, in consequence, by their employers, fear made them retrace their steps; but a terrific storm supervened, and once more arrested the work of spoliation. Thus it remained until Monseigneur Rez, the venerable Bishop of Annecy, anxious to rekindle in the hearts of his people the dormant flame of faith and love implanted by the Saint 300 years before, resolved

to restore and beautify this ruined and desolate sanctuary, and fixed on the day above mentioned for its reopening. In so doing he had a double meaning,—first, because it was the anniversary of the first Mass offered by St. Francis on this spot; and next, because of the Feast itself, as a most fitting emblem of that Exaltation of the Cross in the hearts of men which was the distinguishing characteristic of St. Francis's apostolic labours. Wherever Protestantism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reared its noxious head, there its advent was accompanied with the destruction of the Cross. Against this emblem of our holy Faith the special rage of all heretics was directed. With iconoclastic zeal they broke down, mutilated, and destroyed every vestige of the holy sign. And therefore St. Francis, burning with zeal to repair this insult, instituted at Annecy a "Confraternity of the Cross," of which the members bound themselves specially to rescue from degradation and restore to their sanctuaries the crosses which had been trodden underfoot; and, still more, to atone by their hearts' devotion for the injury and impiety offered to our Lord in the representation of Him-

self in His Sacred Passion. To describe the triumph of the Cross in this Chablais mission by the apostolic labours of this great Saint is the object of the following pages.*

It is not easy to form a just idea of the importance of the House of Savoy in the beginning of the fifteenth century, from the limited territories to which it was afterwards restricted. Embracing originally the Pays de Vaud, the Valais, and the cantons of Geneva and Fribourg, in Switzerland, the French provinces up to the very gates of Lyons, and a large portion of Piedmont and the north of Italy, the kings of Savoy could hold their own among the most powerful of the smaller states of Europe. But, in the reign of Duke Charles III., Francis I., King of France, having made a league with the Reformed Swiss Cantons, made a sudden inroad into the dukedom of Savoy, depriving Charles of all his French and Italian provinces, and of the Canton of Berne; and then, profiting by the distress and confusion into which these reverses had thrown

* For many of the personal adventures in the life of Saint Francis during this period the writer is indebted to a little work published at Lyons in 1843, entitled 'Relation abrégée des Travaux de l'Apôtre du Chablais,' and which appeared in what is called "La Bibliothèque de Philothée."

him, invaded the Pays de Vaud, took possession of the Province of Chablais, and occupied the whole of the southern shore of the Lake of Geneva. Not content with this usurpation, the Berne Senate determined to undermine the Catholic religion established in those cantons, and for that purpose divided the conquered provinces into certain bailiwicks, or townships, of which the principal was fixed at Thonon, on the borders of the Lake. There were two large and important churches in this town: one, dedicated to St. Hippolytus, Martyr, was served by a Prior and Monks of the Benedictine order; the other, by the Augustinians, so called after their Patron Saint, St. Augustine. The authorities of Berne, having driven out the Religious, determined to send two eminent Protestant preachers, named Farel and Lambertet, to preach during the Lent of 1536, and try to bring the people to embrace the Calvinist heresy. This they accordingly attempted, but without success; and on the 6th of May, Lambertet, the most audacious of the two, took possession of the pulpit in the church of St. Hippolytus, and endeavoured to address the people. A scene of great confusion followed; he was

absolutely refused a hearing, and one of the citizens, named Thonon, forced him to come down from the pulpit. The mayor, upon this, seized Thonon and put him in prison; upon which the inhabitants of the town rose *en masse*, sounded the tocsin, flew to arms, and compelled the mayor to take refuge in the Castle. The Government of Berne, to punish this tumult, which they qualified with the name of rebellion, sent six commissioners, who, on the 4th of June, destroyed and defaced the sacred images, burnt the crosses, forbade the exercise of the Catholic religion, drove away from the town both priests and religious, and established in their place this very Lambertet, who had been the cause of the outbreak, and who exercised his functions for the following ten years. The Protestants gave the following account of the success of his mission:—"He preached in the midst of endless contradictions to a superstitious and stiffnecked people, who utterly refused to give credence to his word."

The Government, in order still further to carry out their views with regard to the establishment of the new and "reformed" religion in the conquered provinces, called a public meeting

at Lausanne, to which all denominations of priests were summoned, in order to discuss the disputed points of faith with their opponents. The Chapter of the Cathedral and the priests, secular and religious, could not refuse the summons which cited them to appear; but they utterly declined to discuss religious questions before a tribunal so constituted, alleging that judgment on matters of Faith belonged exclusively to the Head of the Universal Church. This refusal exasperated the authorities, who proceeded to publish an edict, dated 24th December, 1536, of which the following were the principal provisions:—

1. That only two Sacraments should be administered in the Chablais: that of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

2. That any priest who would embrace the Reformed faith should be secured in the undisturbed possession of his temporalities.

3. That all capital and funded property belonging to the Church should be confiscated.

4. That every religious, male or female, and every priest, was henceforth at liberty to marry.

5. That no festivals should be tolerated but

Christmas, the Circumcision, the Annunciation, the Ascension, and Sundays.

The edict, likewise, strictly forbade the exercise of any Catholic rite or function, especially the ringing of bells for the dead, on a penalty of ten florins for each offence.

The largest portion of the churches and chapelries were destroyed, together with the whole of the convents and religious houses. The priests who refused to apostatize were exiled, and the monks and nuns received a miserable pension utterly insufficient for their maintenance. The revenues of the Benedictine Priory of St. Hippolytus were given to the citizens, on condition that they should maintain out of them the hospital, schools, and public edifices of the town. The rest of the Church property was deliberately confiscated and appropriated by the State, and to all intents and purposes Catholicism was banished from the land.*

* We cannot but be struck by the similarity between the state of the Chablais at that time and the condition of Italy in the present day. The same cry of Utilitarianism was uttered by the Calvinist of the sixteenth century as is now raised by the Garibaldian in the nineteenth, to justify their greed for gold, and their appropriation, for their own purposes, of the lands of others.

One man alone stood out bravely against the tide. This was Michael, Baron of Viry, who, with his whole family, refused absolutely to submit to the State, or embrace the new dogmas. He was so much looked up to and beloved by the whole neighbourhood, that the Mayor or Prefect of Viry advised the Senate to abstain from any open prosecution, and to allow him to exercise his religious liberty in his private chapel at La Perrière. His house became a refuge for the outcast Catholics around, and there the little seed was preserved which afterwards was to bear fruit an hundredfold.

Soon after these melancholy events, Duke Charles died, and was succeeded by his son, Emmanuel Philibert, the hero of his age, who very soon compelled the King of France to restore his conquered provinces. They did not include, however, the Swiss usurpations, which the new King resolved to win back, if possible, by negotiation. On the 30th of October, 1564, a treaty of peace was concluded, by which the Chablais was given back to the kingdom of Savoy; but on the hard condition that Protestantism should remain the religion of the State.

The King, to protect himself against the machinations of the Senate of Berne, of whose fidelity he had grave doubts, obtained from Pope Gregory XIII. a Bull instituting the Order of the Knights of "SS. Maurice and Lazare," both to serve as a body of defenders for his own person, and also to protect the properties and interests of the Church; the Bull stipulating, "that should the day arise when these countries should return to the light of truth, a portion of the revenues of these Knights should be employed in the resuscitation of the churches and the restoration of the ancient Faith."

This good Duke died in 1580, and was succeeded by his son, Charles Emmanuel. Thirteen years of disastrous anarchy followed, nearly ruining this beautiful province, which was conquered and reconquered by one party after the other, and subjected to the greatest atrocities on the part of the Protestants, who sacked the churches which the Duke had restored, burnt the images of the Blessed Virgin, trod underfoot the Blessed Sacrament, pillaged the sacred vessels, and committed every sacrilege which senseless bigotry could invent. But in 1593 Provi-

dence brought these miseries to a close. Henry IV., King of France, abjured the Protestant Faith; and the Genevan and Bernese heretics, finding themselves thus deprived of French support, petitioned for a truce, by which the disputed towns were once more given up to the Duke of Savoy, who, by their shameless infraction of past treaties, considered himself absolved from the old stipulation as regarded the Catholic religion, and proceeded at once, though with laudable caution, to re-establish it in his restored dominions.

For this purpose he wrote to the Bishop of Geneva, Claude de Garnier, entreating him to send at once to the town of Thonon a wise and holy priest, who should inaugurate this good work, and who, protected by the Catholic garrison in the fortress, would be able, without danger, openly to celebrate Catholic rites, and propagate the true Faith among the people. The Bishop sent a good and virtuous priest, named Thomas Francis Bouchert, who at once undertook this arduous mission. But the following year the castle of Thonon was betrayed, and destroyed by the Bernese troops; and the

poor priest, fearing for his life, and utterly despairing of effecting any conversions among the Protestants, quitted his post, and returned to report his failure to the Bishop at Annecy. But the Duke, no way disheartened by this state of things, rebuilt and fortified the castle of Allinges, and wrote again to the Bishop, imploring for fresh workers in this neglected spiritual vineyard, and assuring them of his support and protection.

Now the good Bishop found himself in a great strait. On the one hand, he was very anxious not to give up the Chablais mission; but, on the other, it was most difficult to find any one in the diocese to undertake it. One alone he knew was fitted for the arduous work, and this was a young man of only twenty-seven years of age, lately appointed Provost of the Cathedral, and only very recently admitted to priest's orders; but this man was Francis de Sales.

The life of this great Saint has been so ably written in so many different languages, that there is no need to give more than a cursory outline of it here. Born of noble parents,

trained from his infancy in all that was "lovely and of good report," he lived for several years with his family in the Castle of Brens, in the Chablais. "It was meet and right," writes the Canon of Hauteville, "that Francis should in his youth become familiarized with the spots which were to be hereafter the scenes of his greatest battles and his most glorious victories." At thirteen he was sent to the Jesuit College of Paris, where he passed six years. From thence he went to Padua to study jurisprudence, in which he spent four years more, and then returned home—a model of intelligence, learning, and piety. On his way to the Château de Sales he stopped to pay a visit to the Bishop of Geneva, who received him with cordial affection, and invited him to be present at a theological discussion, which was about to take place on the occasion of the candidature for a certain vacant cure. Francis gladly accepted the invitation, and was placed as an honoured guest by the side of the Bishop. A dispute having arisen on some controverted point, the Bishop asked Francis to solve it, and the latter, compelled by obedience to take part in the discussion, which

his modesty at first had made him positively refuse, delivered his opinion with such wonderful intelligence and skill, that the whole assembly was struck dumb with surprise and admiration. When he had left the Palace, the Bishop, turning to those around him, exclaimed prophetically, "That youth will be my successor in the diocese, and a pillar of the Church of God." Soon after his return home, his father sent him to Chambéry to take his doctor's degree, and the young Francis took the opportunity of conferring with the Bishop on the steps which it would be most advisable for him to take, in order to ensure the consent of his family to his embracing the ecclesiastical state, on which his heart had long been set. The Bishop advised him to wait a little before declaring this intention; and in the meantime, with the co-operation of his cousin, Louis de Sales, he secretly obtained from Rome a Bull authorizing Francis's appointment to the Provostship of the Cathedral, knowing that the attainment of this dignity would soften the feelings of his family towards the proposed step. Francis's hopes, however, seemed destined to be frustrated al-

together by the extreme anxiety of his father, both that he should accept the post of senator awarded him by the Duke of Savoy, and also that he should marry a rich, amiable, and beautiful girl, the daughter of one of their oldest friends, and a match unexceptionable in every respect, both as to religion and personal character. But Francis, to the surprise and despair of his parents, refused both offers. Not long after, the suspense becoming intolerable to him, and his vocation day by day stronger, he resolved to reveal the cause to his father and mother, and, taking his cousin with him, implored their consent for him to embrace the ecclesiastical state. Louis de Sales backed up his entreaty by producing, as much to Francis's astonishment as to that of his parents, the Papal Bull obtained by the Bishop, appointing him Provost of the Cathedral. M. de Boisy (as the old Count de Sales was called) was stupefied at his son's proposal, which took him completely by surprise, and at first flatly refused his consent. But after combating Francis's generous resolution for a long time, he yielded to the entreaties of his wife, who warned him that, should he oppose so decided a

vocation, it would be refusing him permission to follow the voice of God, and that their son would then find means to escape from them, as St. Alexis and St. Bernard had done. Armed with his father's consent and blessing, Francis lost no time in hastening back to the Bishop of Geneva, from whom he received minor orders on the 8th of June, 1593.

The day after his ordination, the Bishop invited him and his whole family to dine with him to celebrate the event. "Until now," he exclaimed, tenderly embracing his young friend, "you never had received anything at my hands. My predecessor, Angelo Justiniani, confirmed you, M. de Bagneray gave you the tonsure; but now you are really my son and my subdeacon, and very soon you will be something more."

Francis replied, looking gaily round at his family, who were all assembled in the hall, "My father, am I the Prodigal Son that you have made this banquet to rejoice over my recovery?"

The old Bishop replied with emotion, "My child, you are a son to whom God has been prodigal of His graces."

After dinner the Bishop, who had the highest

opinion of his powers, told him that he expected him to preach on the following Thursday, which happened to be the Feast of Corpus Christi. Circumstances afterwards delayed the matter till the Octave, on which day it was finally decided that he should deliver his first sermon. But when the morning came, Francis was seized with a sudden panic, and such a violent fever came on that he was compelled to throw himself on his bed at the very moment when the bells were ringing for service. In despair, he made a fervent appeal to God for health and strength, which was granted to him, and he was able to get up and go into the Cathedral. He preached on the Real Presence,—a sermon which came from his heart and which positively electrified his hearers, half of whom were in tears. The Bishop was as much moved as the rest, and went on exclaiming to one person after the other, "Have you heard my son? has he not spoken admirably? I feel he has been sent on purpose by God to regenerate the Church, and to save this people from their sins."

The ladies of the congregation surrounded his mother, who was weeping joyful tears, and ap-

plied to her the words of the Evangelist, "Beatus venter qui te portavit."

But the greatest triumph was the conversion of three leading Calvinist gentlemen who had come out of sheer curiosity to hear the new preacher. One of these was a man of great talent and erudition who had studied theological questions, and he was so struck at the arguments put forth with such clearness and simplicity by Francis in defence of this the great mystery of our faith, that, for the first time, he began to have doubts as to the truth of his own religion, which doubts were speedily followed by his abjuration.

On the 18th December of the same year, Francis was promoted to priest's orders, on which occasion his ecstatic devotion amazed the assistants. The Bishop forthwith commanded him to make an exhortation to the remaining candidates, of which duty he acquitted himself so admirably that the Bishop turned to his Chapter and said, "God has not granted to *me* the gift of speech; but He has given me a son who will be my mouthpiece and my voice." From this time until the day when the Duke of

Savoy forwarded his second petition to the Bishop for help in the Chablais mission, Francis worked quietly and steadily at Annecy. His profound humility disarmed such of the Chapter as had taken umbrage at his appointment on account of his youth and inexperience; while the whole tone of the people seemed changed by his all-powerful influence, and the irresistible charity of his life and conversation. Inexorably severe towards himself, to others he was ever tender and indulgent; and he denied himself even the necessaries of life to contribute to the support of the necessitous poor around him.

When, therefore, the Bishop, incapacitated by age and infirmities from undertaking the mission himself, looked round his diocese for some one suited to the urgent work proposed to him, he could find no one but his young Provost in the least equal to the occasion. He cautiously abstained, however, from mentioning it to him, and simply summoned a meeting of the Cathedral Chapter, at which Francis, in virtue of his office, was compelled to preside, and then made them all a moving discourse on the sub-

ject of the Duke's letter, which he first read to the assembly. A profound and chilling silence followed the Bishop's appeal; but all turned to look at the Provost, whose business it was to speak first, and whose face seemed perfectly radiant with joy and emotion. He rose, and said simply and earnestly, "Monseigneur, if you think me capable and worthy of this mission, I undertake it with joy. 'In verbo tuo laxabo rete.'" The Bishop's thankfulness was only damped by the sorrow he felt at losing him from Annecy, and by the natural fear lest one so dear to him and so precious to the Church should fall a victim to the fury of the heretics. But the urgency of the case admitted of no further delay; so that he accepted Francis's generous offer, and prepared to do all that in him lay to ensure its success.

Far different, however, was the scene at the Château de Sales when the fatal news became known. M. de Boisy had yielded with reluctance to his son's desire of embracing the ecclesiastical state; but at least he was assured of an eligible position for him, where his rank and character would ensure him universal respect.

But to send him on this Chablais mission was to expose him to certain dangers, and perhaps an ignominious death. He flew to Annecy, and overwhelmed Francis with entreaties and reproaches. Finding him inexorable, he rushed to the Bishop's palace, and throwing himself at his feet exclaimed, "Reverend Father, I permitted my eldest son, the hope of my old age, the joy of my life, to sacrifice himself to the Church, and become a confessor; but I cannot consent that he should likewise become a martyr, and be sent as a victim to the shambles to be torn in pieces by wolves." The Bishop was much moved at the old man's grief and representations; but Francis gently reminded his father of the Gospel words, "Nesciebatis quia in his quæ Patris mei sunt oportet me esse?" and the Bishop added, "Remember that you both bear the name of St. Francis of Assisi, that seraph of holy love for souls; your son is but following in his footsteps by thus embracing the banner of your crucified Lord. Think, too, of the sacrifice of Abraham, who himself took the knife to slay his son." The poor father exclaimed, "I am not worthy that an angel should

arrest my hand. I cannot be the murderer of my own boy!" Francis, throwing himself at his father's feet, exclaimed, "Father, give me not only your consent, but your blessing!" M. de Boisy replied, "God forbid that I should ever curse you, my son! you, whose benediction I have so often heard from the steps of the altar and in the tribunal of penance. But as for consenting to this mad undertaking, I cannot do it. It is of no use asking me," and so saying, the poor old man left the palace, and returned in tears to his château, there to be soothed, but not consoled, by the stronger faith of his wife.

In the meantime, Francis occupied himself very diligently in preparations for his mission. Many eminent ecclesiastics offered to accompany him; but he chose only his cousin, Louis de Sales, in the first instance, thinking it would be wiser to begin as humbly and quietly as possible. He asked for the prayers of the whole diocese for the success of their undertaking, which were gladly accorded to him; and then went to the Bishop to receive his letters and credentials, together with his special blessing on their work.

It was on the 9th of September, 1594, that the two young apostles started on their evangelical mission, accompanied by the good wishes and prayers of the whole town. It was necessary to pass by the Château de Sales, where Francis had a fresh battle to fight with his family. They represented to him that he was going on an inglorious mission, where failure was next to certain, and that he would return to be the laughing-stock of the country.

Francis modestly but firmly maintained his ground, winding up his discourse with the words, "God will provide. It is He who sustains His warriors in the day of battle. Under such a chief, one can bear and dare all."

"The Château de Sales," writes a contemporary of our Saint, "was at that time one of the most beautiful in Savoy, situated at the foot of Mount Ferreo, and surrounded with lovely gardens and shrubberies. A fountain in the centre, and a lake on one side, added to its charms. The house itself was exceedingly convenient and spacious, comprising within its enclosure several courts, halls, and galleries, the latter affording beautiful views over the whole of the distant landscape."

Yet all this Francis seems to have left without a thought or even a regret. During their visit, the cousins determined to spend a couple of days in retreat,—days consecrated by them to a general confession, fasting, corporal penances, and prayer, so that in deep humility and purity of heart, they might begin their warfare against the pride and obstinacy of their enemies.

The evening of the second day, Francis went to take leave of his mother. Her conduct throughout had been admirable. Feeling overpoweringly the parting with her son, and miserably anxious at the dangers he was about to run, she still had the Christian heroism to conceal her anguish, not saying one word to divert him from his purpose, but zealously co-operating in all the plans he had formed for the success of his mission, and that with an ardour worthy of the mother of an apostle.

This terrible parting over, Francis went back to the chapel, where, as a child, he had so often knelt with that tender mother before the altar, and repeated, evening after evening, his childish prayers, and there the noble sacrifice of his whole future life to God was consummated and ac-

cepted. His natural sorrow quenched in the Sacred Presence, Francis spent the rest of the night in prayer, for the success of his mission; and the next morning the cousins started at break of day, avoiding all further leave-takings; and without either servants or provisions; his father having expressly forbidden that any assistance should be given to them, hoping thereby to disgust them and deter them from their enterprise. So, in poverty and actual want, St. Francis left his ancestral home; and thus those true followers of their crucified Lord began a work which was to redound so much to the glory of God, and immortalize the Saint by whose indefatigable labours it was accomplished.

The evening of the 14th September, our two missionaries, crossing the river Arves by the bridge of Boringues, arrived at the village of St. Cerques, which was at the entrance to the Chablais. There they knelt, and, after fervent prayer to God, invoked the Titular Angel of the Province to bless their steps, and recommended themselves specially to his protection. By evening they reached the foot of the hill, on

the summit of which was the citadel of Allinges. The Duke of Savoy had garrisoned it with Catholic soldiers, and placed the Baron Hermance there as governor of the whole province. To him Francis presented his letters of recommendation and introduction, with the orders of the Duke and the Bishop, as regarded their mission. The Governor, who was a man of the highest character, and a devout Catholic, received our missionaries with the greatest joy; and having entertained them at supper, conducted them himself to the apartments he had prepared for them.

The next morning they said their mass in the chapel of the fortress, and then the Baron took them all over the citadel, and, showing them the batteries, exclaimed, "We shall no longer want our cannon when you have gained the ears and the hearts of this people!" He then conducted them to the terrace, from whence the view over the vast plain of the Chablais is rather like that of the Granada Vega from the towers of the Alhambra. But the saint could not find any pleasure in the view, beautiful as it was; for on every side he saw ruins of churches, of convents,

and of presbyteries, the wayside cross replaced by the gibbet; in fact, all the signs of a country devastated by heresy and civil war. Leaning his arms on the parapet of the bastion, he burst into tears, exclaiming with the prophet Isaiah, "He will take away the hedge of His vineyard, and it shall be wasted. He will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down, and He will make it desolate." And again, in the words of Jeremiah, "Sion is a desolation; there are no prophets more. The stones of her sanctuary are scattered in her streets; and a voice of wailing is heard out of Sion, 'How are we wasted and greatly confounded!'"

Then turning to his cousin, Louis de Sales, he exclaimed, "Let us beseech our Lord that He may give us His grace, so that we may gather together the scattered stones of these His sanctuaries, and rebuild the altars which have been thrown down."

Nine years afterwards, writing to the Pope of this time, he says, "On arriving in the Chablais, nothing but heart-breaking sights met our eyes. Out of sixty-five parishes, excepting a few officers of the Duke's garrisons (as he would

have none but children of the Church in his army), there were scarcely fifty Catholics. The churches were desecrated or destroyed, the Cross everywhere broken down; while in every hamlet the self-appointed ministers of the new heresy went about preaching and levying heavy tithes on the people, their main object seeming to be sordid gain."

In the afternoon the two missionaries had a long and earnest conversation with Baron Hermance as to the best way to set about their proposed work. He was a man of great virtue, experience, and prudence, and one whose opinion was in every way most valuable. He promised them all the support which was in his power, but told them that their undertaking required the greatest circumspection. "I do not think," he continued, "that during the night you are safe out of the fortress; nor that, without great peril, you could, at first, say mass at Thonon; you must begin by preaching only. If you find it impossible now and then to return here to mass, you might celebrate It in the ruined chapel of the monks of St. Bernard, the choir of which is still available for that purpose. This little church

is on the borders of the lake, and might easily be put in good repair at small cost. Or you might cross the river Drance, and use the church of the village of Marin. But what is absolutely necessary is that you should not sleep away from the fortress."

The missionaries promised to follow his advice, and took up their abode in the citadel.

The next morning, having said mass in the fortress chapel, they started on foot for Thonon, which was about a league from the Château of Allinges. Among the *employés* of the Duke was a man named Claude Marin, procurator-fiscal, a good and earnest Catholic, on whose fidelity every dependence could be placed. To his house our missionaries repaired, and heard from him all the dètails he could give as to the state of the town. They found that there were not above seven Catholic families left in the place, most of whom were strangers brought in for the sake of their trade; that even these families were afraid to practise their religion openly, though they were rejoiced at the news of the arrival of the missionaries. Francis having assembled them in the house of Claude

Marin, made them a little address in which he told them that he was come to be their pastor, and that he must first set before them the duty of openly acknowledging their faith, insisting on the words of our Lord as to those who denied Him before men being denied before His Father in Heaven. This address made a great impression on the little flock, and they promised to meet him in the Church of St. Hippolytus, which at that time was used alternately for Catholic and Protestant services. The missionaries then presented to the Syndic (or mayor) their orders from the Duke of Savoy, and then came back to sleep at Allinges, somewhat encouraged by the evident joy the few Catholics in the place had shown at their arrival.

It would be impossible to give an idea of the fury of the Protestants of Thonon when they heard of the mission of the two cousins. The ministerial party vented their rage by assailing in every way their personal character. The Protestant clergy denounced them as false prophets, sorcerers, and magicians. Such as were afraid of drawing down upon themselves the displeasure of those in power, held aloof from all inter-

course either with the missionaries themselves or with those in any way connected with them. The news flew to Geneva, and there a public meeting was instantly held by the Protestant party, in which it was declared that the Duke of Savoy had violated the conditions on which the Chablais was ceded to him, and that any one was at liberty to take the lives of the two Papists who had dared to undertake the mission; some of them went so far as to swear that they themselves would be their assassins. All this was duly reported to Francis, who merely smiled, and said to Louis, "Are you afraid? If not, we shall be all right." And on Louis assuring him "that he had never dreamt of fear," the Saint began excusing the violence of the Protestant pastors, saying, "Put yourself in their place. They imagine we are going to take the bread out of their mouths. Let us only 'pray hard' for them, and say with the Emperor Tiberius, 'It is fortunate for us if they don't say worse things of us.'"

M. de Boisy was not so much at ease as his son when news was brought him of the way in which his life was threatened and menaced

on every side. Determined to bear it no longer, he sent his old and faithful servant, George Roland, with horses and escort and a positive command to bring Francis back; but the Saint was unmoved by his representations. He advised his cousin Louis, however, to go back with them for a short time, in order to calm the anxiety of his family; while he himself remained entirely alone in the Chablais to prosecute his great work. Years afterwards, he told Madame de Chantal that he had never felt so joyous or so strong as when thus left, entirely unaided, to preach the Word of God; and that then, for the first time, he felt a certainty of the success of his enterprise; being sure that God would not fail to sustain him with the might of His arm. His cousin Louis very soon returned to help him, and they worked away with a holy ardour to clear away the briars from their Lord's vineyard. Francis made it a rule to preach every Sunday and festival at St. Hippolytus; but he also went to Evian and other villages, sending Louis one way and himself the other, and everywhere teaching and expounding from morning till

night. He always went on foot; his stick, his Breviary, and his Bible being his sole companions.

One night, on the 12th December, being on an expedition of this kind, night came on suddenly; the earth was covered with snow, and he found himself alone in a large wood full of wolves, which at that time infested the neighbouring forests. Afraid of being devoured, he climbed up into a tree to pass the night; and then, lest he should fall asleep and drop from the branch, he tied himself with his leathern girdle to the stem. The next morning some peasants from a neighbouring village found him there, nearly frozen with cold and unable to move, for the night had been most rigorous. They carried him down from the tree, and, taking him to their own home, gently chafed his numbed limbs and brought him back to warmth and consciousness. Their charity was not without its reward, for the Saint profited by the occasion to speak to them on things concerning their eternal salvation. His gentle, loving voice and manner effected even more than his words, and the zeal he had shown in braving every kind of peril and suffering for the

sake of bringing back a few stray sheep to the fold, spoke more forcibly to their hearts than a thousand sermons. These poor peasants were moved and touched, and the seed of their conversion was then sown,—a seed which was to produce hereafter such abundant fruits. Writing twenty years after to one of the nuns of the Convent of the Visitation, who had been one of his convert children in the Chablais, he says, "My child, you were dear to me from the time when, as a little thing, you sat on your mother's knee; in those days, when I went from house to house striving to gather together the strayed lambs of Christ's fold, in your home I was always well and kindly received. Hundreds of times have I blessed you and prayed that you might some day be reckoned among the spouses of our Lord. I love to look back on those first days of my ministry,—days of trial, maybe, and yet often of deep joy; and I, remembering those days, love to think how long it is that you have been my child."

M. de Boisy, however, could not get over the feeling of his son's danger. His wife profited by it to represent to him how wrong he had

been to prevent his faithful servant, George Roland, from accompanying him on this painful mission. She made him feel how useless it was to fancy that, by this conduct, he would shake his son's resolution; and that, in fact, it only increased his danger, by depriving him of the help and comforts that were so necessary to him in his critical and arduous journeys. The result of her representations was that M. de Boisy sent George Roland back to Francis at the beginning of the year 1595, and to the records of this devoted and faithful servant (who from that hour never left him) we are mainly indebted for the details of the most interesting personal adventures which befell the Saint during this eventful period.

But God Himself interposed on several occasions to save His servant from dangers of which even George Roland knew nothing. There was one person who, in the height of fanatical fury, carried his sectarian zeal to the length of deliberately planning the Saint's murder. This man deposed upon oath, at the time of the Beatification of St. Francis, that he had sworn to kill him, and to carry his head to Geneva or

Berne; that on the 8th of January he had three times concealed himself at the corner of a road, which would have enabled him easily to accomplish his purpose, and that each time his gun missed fire, although on every other occasion his aim had been sure. That, baffled in these attempts, he posted various other people in different side-roads, where he knew his enemy must pass; but on each occasion God rendered His apostle invisible, for they never saw him, although he walked by the actual path where the assassins were lying in wait to kill him. The instigator of this diabolical design was at last touched by the wonderful way in which Providence shielded Francis from all harm: his eyes were opened to the truth, he abjured his heresy, and became afterwards one of the Saint's most devoted and faithful followers.

At the beginning of the year 1595 Francis began, as he says, "at the instigation of a grave and devout person," a work which was destined to bear much fruit. This was a short, clear, and simple exposition of Catholic doctrine, written on loose sheets for distribution among Protestants, with an answer to the principal ob-

jections raised by the Calvinists against the Church. In the preface to this work he gives four admirable reasons for this publication :—

1. To put before Protestants truths of which they were grossly ignorant, and which they had not a chance of knowing, as they never dared, except by stealth, to come to hear him preach.

2. To answer the objections of those who pretended he had not the courage to face the Calvinist ministers, as a thing *in writing* was, of course, open and patent to all readers.

3. To give the Calvinists themselves an opportunity of weighing gravely and calmly the arguments on both sides of the question.

4. To prove that the doctrine he taught was in exact conformity with that of the Roman Catholic Church, which his enemies pretended he had altered, in order to suit the tastes of his Protestant hearers.

This work occupied him for four or five years, his labours in other ways being so arduous and incessant that he could only write by snatches; but each little bit was copied and distributed, and flew like wildfire from hand to hand. It was never entirely completed, but the fragments

that have come down to us are so admirable that the Apostolic Commissioners employed in the process of his canonization in 1658 declared that neither St. Athanasius, St. Ambrose, nor St. Augustine had ever defended the Faith with greater skill or ability. Its great merit consists in the extreme simplicity and clearness with which the author has stated his opinions, so as to bring them within the reach of the most humble and ignorant among his readers. It is impossible to conceive the effect produced by these slight sheets. Every one read and discussed them; and the Calvinists were beyond measure surprised at the way in which all their favourite arguments were disproved, while some among them were equally startled at finding how their prejudices and misconceptions regarding the Catholic faith melted away before the sunshine of God's Truth. But much toil and suffering were still to be borne before any change could be effected in so deeply-rooted an evil, and Francis's patience and courage were to be severely tested ere he could reap the harvest he had sown.

The winter, always severe in Savoy, was this

year one of unusual rigour. The roads were one sheet of ice, and Francis was obliged to put iron clamps on his shoes, in order to keep his footing on the slippery paths. He never missed, however, his daily walks to Thonon, or returning at night, when possible, to the citadel, from however great a distance; although often compelled, owing to the nature and slipperiness of the road, to crawl on hands and knees. As he suffered terribly from broken chilblains, his heels soon became in such a state that the blood stained the snow as he walked along, penetrating through his stockings and gaiters. But he never deigned to take the least notice of his sufferings from this or any other cause, so that his patience became a subject of continual amazement to his servant and to the soldiers of the garrison, who sometimes accompanied him on these expeditions. When they returned to the fortress, they were never weary of talking of his courage, his goodness, his gentleness, and his affability to all; and as Francis was not only accessible to every one, but even made occasions for the men to come and speak to him, he very soon became the father of the soldiers, whose

confidence in his judgment was only equalled by their veneration for his sanctity. Severe in reproving vice in whatever shape, he mingled his reproaches with such wonderful gentleness and sweetness that few could resist his entreaties. He waged special war against the swearing and duelling which were the fashion among military men at that time, and succeeded in putting a stop to both in the garrison. After a time the fortress became more like a well-ordered monastery than the abode of a troop of soldiers; yet he exacted from them no practices of piety but such as were conformable to their state. Never was there a spiritual guide who better understood how to regulate the soul of each person according to his condition; his 'Introduction to a Devout Life' is alone a proof of this. During Lent he gave them a course of lectures to prepare them for Confession and Paschal Communion; and his instructions had so marvellous an effect that the very nature of the men seemed changed. One of the soldiers was so impressed by St. Francis's words, and so full of compunction for his past sins, that he was on the eve of falling into despair. Francis took

particular care of him: made him eat with him, and even sleep in his room, and when he had made a general confession of the sins of his whole life, so keen and bitter was his contrition that the Saint only gave him for his penance one Pater and one Ave. The soldier exclaimed, "My father! do you wish me to be lost eternally, that you award me such slight punishment for such heavy crimes?"—"No," replied Francis; "but I want you to learn to confide in the mercy of God, which is greater than all our sins, and to believe in the precious blood of Christ, which atones for all. As to your penance, I shall take that on myself: you know I do not shrink from pain."—"That is not just, father," exclaimed the poor fellow, "for I am a grievous sinner, and you are a saint of God." Soon after, this man asked for and obtained his discharge, so that he might, in the austere order of the "Chartreuse," spend the rest of his life in penitence and prayer.

But Francis's care of the garrison did not make him in any way abate his labours in the Chablais. One night he arrived, with his cousin Louis, at a village of which all the doors

were closed. In vain they knocked and entreated for admission. The inhabitants, who were simple and ignorant peasants, resolutely refused to receive them, as they had been told that the missionaries were sorcerers and magicians, who would bring evil on any house which they might happen to enter. The cold was intense; but fortunately they found the village oven still warm, and there they took refuge during the night, whereby their lives were saved. On a similar occasion, a few days later, the rain descended in torrents; but they found shelter under the eaves of a barn, and there passed the night, dripping wet as they were. Another evening the Saint had been detained till very late at Thonon, and it was quite dark when he set out with the faithful George Roland to return to the fortress of Allinges. They lost their way in a forest on the road, and, after wandering up and down for some hours, came on the ruins of a church of which the roof in part remained, and there they resolved to stay during the rest of the night. Francis, kneeling on a stone covered with moss, which had formerly been the altar-step, exclaimed:—

"Father! strangers have entered into Thy heritage, and have defiled Thy holy temple. Ah! deign to make our hearts the temple of Thy Holy Spirit. Have mercy, O Lord! on these Thy benighted people. Command the eagles that they cease from their ravages. Make Thy south wind to blow softly over this garden, that it may bring forth once more sweet flowers and fruits. O Father! bless the design Thou hast Thyself inspired. Pour Thy grace into the hearts of these people, and kindle in them once more the dormant fire of Thy love, so that the walls of Jerusalem may be rebuilt, and that once more on this altar the lamb may be immolated, and the holy sacrifice offered for the sins of Thy people." After this beautiful and fervent prayer, Francis laid his head on the mossy stone and slept so soundly and so sweetly that George Roland had some trouble in waking him when the day dawned.

Madame de Boisy, in the meanwhile, exhausted all the ingenuity of a mother's love in striving to help her son. She managed to evade the vigilance of her husband (who still resented Francis's missionary life), and to dispatch, from

time to time, not only clothes, money, linen, and other necessaries, but also one or other of his brothers, under pretence of transacting business, and looking after the family property adjoining the Château of Brens. These occasional visits, with the home news and the bright glimpses they afforded him of the love of his mother (to whom he was passionately attached), gave the greatest possible pleasure to Francis, and cheered him in his arduous toil. But God vouchsafed to reward him likewise by supernatural favours of the highest order. On the 23rd of May, 1595, being the day of Corpus Christi (a feast specially dear to the heart of Francis), while he was meditating profoundly on the great mystery of the Blessed Sacrament, he felt his whole soul so inundated with spiritual sweetness that he fell to the earth, exclaiming, "Restrain, O my Lord! the floods of Thy grace! My Saviour! depart a little way from me, for it is not possible for me to bear the torrents of Thy consolations." Afterwards he celebrated mass, and preached with such fervour, unction, and vehemence, that the assistants declared that a kind of glory was seen round his head, and that his face was all

on fire as it were with the glow of Divine love. In spite of all his efforts, however, the work proceeded slowly; for the magistrates did not follow the example of the Baron Hermance, or attempt in any way to promote the cause he had at heart, and their apathy was strengthened by the apparent indifference of the Duke of Savoy himself, who, though he had so urgently sought for the establishment of the missionaries, did not at that time give himself any trouble to ensure the success of their undertaking. This inaction encouraged the heretics in their persecution of our Saint, and they resolved to leave no stone unturned to compass his destruction. On one occasion, when he had gone to the summit of a mountain called Voirons to try and restore a little oratory of the Blessed Virgin, which had been destroyed by the Bernese, they surrounded him, and, insulting him in every possible way, would have put him to death, had he not by a miracle escaped out of their hands. But he rejoiced in his sufferings, saying with St. Paul, on leaving Philippi, "Antè passi et contumeliis affecti, fiduciam habuimus in Deo nostro loqui Evangelium Dei." In speaking of this

afterwards, he owned that it was to him a matter of sorrow and humiliation that he had not been considered worthy to shed his blood for the Mother or the Son.

On the 17th July, the day of St. Alexis, he preached a wonderful sermon at Thonon on the Mediation of Jesus Christ. He showed his hearers that the Catholic Church, so far from destroying this doctrine, based her whole system upon it. "According to her, there is, out of Jesus, no life and no hope. To Him does she appeal, and from him does she look for every help. To Him does she direct all her thanksgivings, centring in this one mediator between God and man all her hopes of salvation. Moreover, she teaches us that all sin is forgiven entirely through the pure mercy and merits of Jesus, from whom proceeds the justice of the just man by the Holy Ghost professing it to be due to a liberality wholly gratuitous. The good works which we do are His gifts, because they proceed from His grace, having, therefore, no other value than that which is imparted to them by the merits of our Saviour and Redeemer. Though we can do nothing of ourselves, we can

do all things in Him who strengthens us; hence all our confidence must be in Jesus."* The Calvinist clergy were exasperated at the effect of this sermon on their flock, and especially at the way it overturned all their pet theories against the Church. They held a public meeting, in which it was resolved, that as they could not impeach his doctrine, the charge of sorcery and magic should be revived against him. They even suborned a man to swear that he had been present at a nocturnal assembly, vulgarly called a "Sabat," where he had seen Francis in communication with the Devils, and added that they would find on his body the marks of the Evil One. The common people, who, in that century, were beyond anything ignorant and credulous, believed these assertions, and openly demanded that the sorcerer should be burnt alive. The new converts, alarmed at their threats, flew to St. Francis, who could not help laughing at the imputations of his enemies, and replied, making the sign of the cross, "This is the only mark I love to bear on my forehead and on my body. This alone saves me from the malice of

* Oratory 'Life of St. François de Sales.'

my enemies, and from the perils which surround me on every side. Armed with this sacred sign, my heart is without fear. If these Protestant gentlemen wish it, I will teach them my secret, and show them the use of the Holy Cross."

These words revived the courage of his flock; but they implored him not to expose his life to the rage of his enemies whilst their fury was at its height. He followed their counsels, and did not return that night to Allinges, hearing that he was to be attacked on the road, but accepted the hospitality of M. Marin. The greater part of the night, however, he spent in prayer and in preparing a fresh sermon, which he was to preach on the morrow, on the Martyrdom of St. Symphorosa and her Seven Children. The next day accordingly, being the 18th of July, he delivered a most moving discourse on this subject, treating it with such force and yet pathos, that the whole congregation were moved to tears. That evening he was compelled to return to the citadel to fetch some papers which he wanted for a letter to the Nunzio. His friends besought him not to go, saying that they knew from the very best authority that people

were stationed in a wood near the road to waylay and kill him. He replied with his usual calmness, "Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. He is my shield and buckler. It is in Him alone that I place my confidence and hope."

They then proposed to him to take a bye-road, so as to approach Allinges by a more circuitous route; but he refused. He consented, however, to allow two of his most devoted Catholic friends to accompany him, less for his own safety than to avoid, if possible, the commission of a crime. Arriving at the foot of the mountain, they entered the wood before named just about dusk. Suddenly, from an ambuscade to the left, two men rushed out, armed with naked swords, and sprang forward to attack Francis, uttering the while the most horrible imprecations. His two friends and George Roland ran in front of the Saint, and prepared to defend him by force of arms. This the Saint positively forbade, desiring them, after the example of our Saviour, to put back their swords into the scabbard, "as he himself would

deal with these men." He then walked calmly and boldly straight up to the assassins, and spoke to them with such tenderness, and yet with a countenance so full of majesty, that their fury was suddenly calmed. They threw themselves at his feet, imploring his pardon, and alleging as their excuse the orders they had received from the Protestant clergy. But they assured him that not only would they never again attempt the like, but that they would render him henceforth any service which lay in their power. The Saint forgave and blessed them, and then pursued his road, unmolested, to the fortress. No sooner were they arrived than George Ronald, more dead than alive, hurried to the Governor, and related what had occurred. The Baron flew to the Saint's room, and found him quietly and composedly saying his office. He told him that henceforth he should never allow him to go out alone, but that he must positively be accompanied by an escort of soldiers. But this Francis would not hear of. "St. Paul and the other apostles," he exclaimed, "did not make use of such means to gain their ends. They used but the sword of the Spirit, which is

the word of God. Luther and Calvin established their heresies by force of arms. Let us go on the opposite tack. It belongs to the voice of God alone to break the cedar-trees, and to make the desert of Cades fertile as a rose. But, after all," he added, smiling to his old friend, "should God grant me the grace to seal with my blood the faith which I profess, how glorious for me!" The Baron went out of the room, saying "he could not answer arguments like these;" but he gave secret orders that henceforth two or three of his soldiers should always follow the Saint at a little distance, though without his knowledge, both when he started in the morning on his apostolic labours, and when he returned at night, so as, if possible, to avert the imminent danger to which he was exposed. The soldiers vied with one another as to who should be chosen for this service, and generally five or six were selected, any one of whom would gladly have given his life for the Saint.

The news of the perilous position in which his son was placed again, through George Roland, reached the ears of M. de Boisy, who for

the fourth time sent him peremptory orders to return home, representing to him in the strongest terms, the folly and obstinacy of remaining where he was. The fervent apostle replied by the following letter, which we give verbatim, its courage being only equalled by its humility:—

"Dear and much honoured Father,—Had Roland been your son, and not your servant, he would not have had the cowardice to suggest that we should draw back before a slight reverse; nor would he have made, out of a harmless skirmish, the report of a battle. No one can doubt the hostility of our adversaries; but would you wish them to doubt our courage? By the grace of God, we know that he who perseveres to the end will be saved; and that he only will win the crown who shall have fought for it in the legitimate way. We also know that the sufferings and tribulations of this present time will work for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. I beseech you, then, my Father, not to attribute my perseverance in this work to disobedience or obstinacy, but to believe me ever

"Your most devoted son,

"FRANCIS."

M. de Boisy could not help being touched at the indomitable courage which this letter displayed, and which tallied with his own naturally brave and military character. But it did not reconcile him the more to the idea of losing such a son, and, in what he considered, so inglorious a way. So he rode off for the twentieth time to the Bishop, to complain of the nature of the mission,—to tell him of Francis's danger, and to implore him to recall his faithful Provost to his cathedral duties at Annecy.

The Bishop, knowing the honourable susceptibilities of M. de Boisy, represented to him the disgrace which would ensue, if, at the very moment when the harvest was ready, the labourers were to throw down their sickles,—that it would expose his son to the reproach of the Gospel, "This man began to build, but was not able to finish;" and ended by saying that he would write and ask Francis for an exact report of the progress of the mission, when he would be better able to judge of the probabilities of ultimate success. The Bishop accordingly wrote in that sense, and received the following answer:—

"Monseigneur,—I must simply say, in an-

swer to vour Grace's letter, that the obstinacy of the magistrates is so great that they have issued a public order. forbidding any one to be present at Catholic services, or to listen to our preaching. But in spite of this prohibition, our words and our writings have touched many hearts. who are only wanting a little courage to return to the true fold. So that we think and hope that. with a little patience, the strong man who now guards the House will be cast out by one stronger than he, even by Jesus Christ."

After this, our Saint was left in peace, and continued to give such proofs of intrepidity and courage, that the Senator Faber declared, "he was as a rock, immovable in the midst of the floods."

But the number of Catholics at Thonon was steadily increasing, and Francis made up his mind to give up sleeping at the fortress of Allinges, and to settle himself in the town itself. He felt that his presence would strengthen the faith of the new converts, who had much to suffer in various ways; and that the continual journey backwards and forwards to the citadel was a sheer waste of time.

There was a widow lady living at Thonon, of an old and illustrious family, named Madame de Foug, who had long felt a motherly affection for Francis, whom she called "Her dear son." This lady offered him rooms in her own house, which the Saint accepted with joy; and the Catholics had the happiness of seeing him, in the course of a few days, regularly established in his new quarters. "We shall no longer fear the fury of the wolves," they exclaimed, "since our pastor is now come to live in the midst of us, and shield us from harm."

The Calvinists, more furious at this last move than at all the rest, determined to put him to death. They therefore hired a body of assassins, who came secretly, in the dead of night, to the house of Madame de Foug. Fortunately, Francis had not yet gone to bed. He was watching and praying in his room, as he was wont to do during the greater part of the night, when he heard the hushed tramp of armed men in the street, and their whispered consultation at the door. He at once underderstood their object, and quietly slipped into a secret chamber, cleverly concealed by a panel in

the wall, which Madame de Foug, with thoughtful love, had provided in case of any such emergency. Scarcely had he concealed himself in this secure hiding-place, when the house was attacked, the door battered down, and the men coming in, dispersed themselves in every hole and corner of the building, to discover and seize their prey. But his hiding-place escaped their vigilance, and they returned baffled and disappointed to their employers. His disappearance, when they felt convinced he was in the house all the time, still further confirmed the popular belief as to his supernatural powers; but no further attempt on his life was made at that time, and Francis remained steadily and quietly at Thonon, fulfilling all the duties of the most devoted parish priest, preaching incessantly, visiting the sick, hearing confessions, and administering both to the spiritual and temporal wants of the people. In a letter, written by him at this time to his great friend the Senator Faber, he says, "At last, a way seems to have been opened for the harvest for which we have so long toiled. Some of the principal officials and inhabitants of the town have been led,

partly by curiosity and partly by a higher motive, to come and listen to my sermon on the Holy Eucharist. Those who did not dare come openly, concealed themselves in a place where they could hear without being seen. The result, by the grace of God, has been the conversion of many. But what is still more important, is, that the inhabitants of Thonon have begged their ministers to draw up a Profession of Faith, so that we might discuss together the important points of difference; and from such a conference nothing but good can accrue to the Church of God."

This idea was subsequently abandoned by the Protestants, who dreaded the convincing arguments and eloquence of the Saint. In truth, what promoted the Catholic Faith far more than his sermons, was his daily life and his never-failing love and charity. Day and night he was at the service of the sick and miserable in mind, body, or estate. He would give away everything he had in the world, down to his own necessary food and clothing; and when he had literally nothing left, he would have recourse to the charity of his mother, who never failed to

send him the supplies of which he stood in need. The visible blessing which attended his labours was an evident proof that the spirit of God rested upon him. Madame de Boisy at last brought her husband to see and feel the beauty and reality of the solemn mission in which their son was engaged. This was an untold relief to Francis; and from that time, not only all opposition ceased on the part of his father, but both husband and wife worked together in forwarding to the utmost of their power the apostolic labours of their son. They gave shelter in the Château de Sales to such of the converts as were compelled to resort to flight in order to escape the fury of the heretics; and it is impossible to exaggerate the tender and loving zeal with which Madame de Boisy looked after all their wants, spiritual and temporal, and thus completed the work which Francis had begun. The Saint, in the meanwhile, continued without intermission his pastoral works. As he could not carry the Blessed Sacrament publicly through the streets of Thonon, he used to take a host either in a corporal or in a little silver pyx in the shape of a triangle, suspended by three little

silver chains round his neck, and thus bear our Lord on his breast. Then wrapping himself up in a big cloak, he would walk along very gravely, looking on the ground, without lifting his hat or speaking to any one. This was the sign he had given to the faithful, who no sooner saw him passing down the street in that manner than they left their occupations and silently followed him, though at a little distance, so as not to excite hostile observation; and thus had the comfort of testifying to our Lord, in this His great Mystery of love, the adoration of their faithful hearts. One day the Procurator Fiscal, Claude Marin, met him thus, and, not knowing the preconcerted signal, began talking to him on ordinary business. But Francis whispered to him, "I am bearing the Lord of Lords, and the King of Kings. By-and-by we will talk of your affairs; now you must only follow, and not speak to me." It was an intense joy to him to carry the Blessed Sacrament in that way: his flock often remarked that his face on such occasions positively shone with the fire of his love. Sometimes he would exclaim, "Dominare, Domine, in medio inimicorum Tuorum!"

"The swallow hath found her a place, and the turtle-dove a nest where she may lay her young." "But how comes it, O gentle dove! that Thou hast chosen my breast as a place of Thy rest? My beloved is mine, and He shall dwell in my heart for ever." He used often in after years to speak of the happiness of this service to Madame de Chantal, and would say, "I would put IT quite close to my heart—this Divine Sacrament, this blessed food and life of our souls! Oh, it was such joy to feel IT there!" As prudence still forbade the public sacrifice of the Mass at Thonon, St. Francis used to celebrate it in the little village of Marin, on the other side of the river Drance, in the old church of St. Étienne. He frequently said that he felt the daily sacrifice and prayers there offered did more for the conversion of the Chablais than all the other efforts which God had permitted him to make. "The Apostles always joined prayer to preaching," he would say; "the men who fought under the command of Joshua would not have conquered, had not their leader Moses raised his arms aloft in prayer. They deceive themselves who expect to convert either infidels

or sinners by any other means than those employed by Jesus and His disciples, since God has reserved to Himself alone the power of changing hearts; *this* can never be asked too much." At other times he would go to the Benedictine Abbey on the lakes, which was a very favourite haunt of his. Here he would say his office, make his meditations, and sometimes stop the whole day. On one occasion he went to preach in an old parish church at the foot of the hill, on which rested the citadel of Allinges. It was the day after Christmas, on the Feast of St. Stephen, 1595, and he summoned the inhabitants as usual by the ringing of a bell; but, as it was very bad weather, only seven people came. Some one said to him "that it was not worth while his preaching to so small an audience." He replied "that one soul was as precious to him as a thousand;" and began accordingly a most moving and eloquent discourse on the Invocation of the Saints, of which he explained the Catholic, and refuted the Protestant doctrine with great clearness, yet with great simplicity, in the form of a familiar instruction. Among his seven hearers was a magistrate of

Thonon, who had not long ago abjured the Calvinist errors, but was not as yet well-grounded in the Faith. Though the Saint's sermon was not particularly touching or pathetic, this gentleman began to sob and cry with such violence that the preacher stopped and offered to cease speaking altogether, if his words had so painful an effect on him. The magistrate implored him, on the contrary, to go on, assuring him that his words were precisely the remedy he needed. After the sermon was over, he threw himself at the feet of St. Francis, and exclaimed, "Father Provost, you have saved my life, and, still more, you have saved my soul this day. Blessed be the hour when I first heard your voice! These few minutes have been worth an eternity to me!" He then declared to the audience that one of the Calvinist ministers had persuaded him that he was in grievous error, and that he had determined the following Tnursday to abjure his new faith. That having heard the bell ring, and seen only half-a-dozen poor peasants obey the summons and come into the church, he had said to himself, "Now, if M. de Sales preaches only for the love of God,

he will give us a sermon all the same; but if he preaches for his own glory, he will despise so humble an audience; which will prove to me that he is a charlatan, and teaches lies." He went on to say that the pains and zeal with which St. Francis had explained everything to those half-dozen poor peasants had edified him more than all the rest; and that his words had cleared away for ever the mists of error from his mind, and convinced him of the grand and unutterable truth of the Catholic Church, of which he would ever remain a devout and humble member. This story spread rapidly in the neighbourhood, and contributed to soften many hearts towards the reception of the Faith. St. Francis often quoted it in after days, to prove to his younger clergy the value of a single human soul in the sight of God.

The winter of 1596 was as rigorous as the preceding one; and so much snow fell that, when the thaw came, the waters of the river Drance increased to a torrent, and beat so against the bridge of Thonon that it carried away one of the arches. The bridge thus remained broken in half, and to connect the two ends a plank was

hastily thrown across for the convenience of the foot-passengers. But fresh snow fell, and being followed by intense frost, the plank became covered with a thick coating of ice, which made it virtually impassable to those who wished to cross the bridge. It was, however, the only way in which St. Francis could get to the hamlet of Marin for his daily mass. Every one represented to him the folly of attempting it, and how much wiser it would be for him to give it up for a little while rather than run the risk of his life. But the Saint was persuaded of the great benefit arising from the daily celebration of the Holy Sacrifice in that chapel, and nothing would stop him. He was compelled, however, when he arrived at the plank, to throw himself on his hands and knees, and in that way to crawl over it, clinging on to both sides,—to the great astonishment and even ridicule of those who witnessed it. But nothing was able to cool the ardour of his zeal. The fruit of it was shown the following Lent, when, instead of having forty or fifty persons for his audience, the church could scarcely contain the crowd who poured in to listen to his preaching, and amongst them were some of his most inveterate enemies of the year before.

Thonon was a large market-town to which all the country people resorted weekly, and as they could not on those days attend the lectures and services at St. Hippolytus, Francis turned over in his mind what possible means he could devise for getting at them more directly. For this purpose, taking with him a wooden chair, he placed it in the centre of the market-place, and there sat all day long on market-days, talking and explaining things to the people with such a peculiar kindness and charm that many left their stalls to listen to him, and even on the first day some went away exclaiming, "Well, we never knew about this before. May God put us all in the right way." Numberless conversions followed; and these, returning home to their respective villages, spread the good seed right and left among their friends and acquaintances. "So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed."

The Protestants at last became seriously alarmed at the progress which the true faith was making in their towns and neighbourhood. Their chief pastor was the M. Louis Viret before mentioned, a man of little learning and less piety,

but who had intrigued himself into his present position, and endeavoured to maintain it by sneering at all St. Francis did, and calling him "a sophist who endeavoured to deceive his hearers by a vain pretence of knowledge." To M. Viret the Calvinists now came in a body and insisted on his refuting the arguments of his adversary, reproaching him for his cowardice in avoiding an honest and open discussion of the question. Viret, thus urged, sent for all the ministers of any eminence whom he knew, both in the Chablais and in the Pays de Vaud, and, after a conference with them, it was agreed that a public discussion should be proposed to St. Francis, they being persuaded that the "Papist," as they called him, would never dare to accept such a challenge, especially in the teeth of all the leading men of the country. In consequence of this decision, a deputy was sent to Francis of Sales inviting him to fix a place, day, and hour for the proposed public conference; but, to their dismay, St. Francis accepted the proposal with the utmost joy, at once fixed on time and place, and told the messenger that he could not have conveyed to him more welcome intelligence.

The embarrassment of the Protestants on receiving this answer was very great. They held a fresh meeting at which the minister, M. Viret, speaking in the name of the whole body, was empowered to draw up a profession of faith, that is, a list of certain articles and doctrines necessary to salvation; for they felt that on this point the "Papist" would admit of no tergiversation. But in vain they tried to draw up this confession; not one of them could agree with the other, and as there were as many divergences of opinion as there were clergy, what suited one made the rest furious; so that after a long and acrimonious discussion it was found impossible to arrive at any conclusion which should even resemble unity.*

The Barony d'Avully, who was the great bulwark of Protestantism in that country, was incensed beyond measure at this result. He was a very learned man, had studied questions of theology, and attended many conferences at Geneva and Berne, where his mind had been thoroughly poisoned by the prejudices and lies openly pro-

* What a faithful picture does this give of the proceedings and results of Anglican Convocations in the present day!

pounded against the Church of Rome, which he looked upon as a sink of iniquity, corruption, and absurdity. Nevertheless, he was an honest and a conscientious man, and his opinions had received a severe shock when he became acquainted with St. Francis of Sales, and especially when he had once or twice heard him preach. Still he eagerly desired the proposed conference, and moved heaven and earth to bring it about.

On the day, and at the hour appointed, the whole town of Thonon assembled in the Hôtel de Ville to hear the discussion. St. Francis arrived with his accustomed punctuality, but the Protestant clergy were not so exact. After waiting nearly an hour, M. Viret alone appeared; but it was only with the miserable subterfuge of declaring in the name of his brethren, "that they did not think it prudent to enter into the discussion without the permission of the Duke of Savoy." Francis replied with a smile that this was evidently nothing but an excuse, as no one could doubt the willingness of the Duke to allow the discussion; and he called the whole assembly to witness that he, at any rate, had answered the challenge, and was prepared to enter the lists

alone and single-handed against all comers. Moreover, he added, that if the permission of the Duke were needed, he would undertake at once to obtain it. Accordingly he went to the Baron Hermance, who gave him an official document as governor of the province, signed and sealed by his own hand, authorizing a public conference on the religious questions in dispute, to be held at any time or in any place most convenient to the disputants. But the Protestant clergy found only fresh excuses. In vain Francis met and answered all their subterfuges. They were determined to withdraw; those from the Pays de Vaud crossed the Lake hurriedly and went home; those from the Chablais did the like; and M. Viret was left alone to make excuses of which no one was the dupe. It would be difficult to imagine the damaging effect this conduct produced on the Protestant cause. The converts were triumphant; the heretics blushed at the cowardice which had made their leaders shrink from the fight. A still further sensation was caused by the arrival of a Calvinist minister of great note, named Pierre Petit, sent from Zurich to oppose our Saint; but he, after discussing

the questions in dispute with Francis, was himself converted, and made his public abjuration the following year. In vain the Calvinists stormed and repeated the vilest calumnies against the Catholic Church. The angelic life of St. Francis was a living answer to all these lies. The more the Catholic priest was branded as a dissolute impostor, the more the zeal, purity, humility, and disinterestedness of St. Francis contrasted with the picture drawn of him by his enemies. And thus will it ever be in Protestant countries. The world is often hard, prejudiced, and unjust in its judgments, but, in the long run, they judge of men by their acts and of a religion by its priests. Let Catholics in England be recognized as more charitable, more liberal, more pure, more noble-minded, and yet more humble, forgiving and self-denying than those around them, and they will have done more to preach their faith than all the sermons that ever were invented. Thus did St. Francis, and thus his great work prospered; and to the all-powerful example of his daily life, he added fervent prayer, in which he spent a great portion of the night; and bodily austerities to an extent unknown to

all but God during his life, but which helped to win that answer from on High resulting in the conversion of the whole country to the Faith of Christ.

Antoine de Saint-Michel, Baron d'Avully, had, as we said before, been painfully struck at the conduct of the Protestant clergy on the subject of the conference. He began to have grave doubts as to the truth of a religion which would not bear open discussion, and asked St. Francis to allow him to have some private interviews with him on the subject of the points in dispute. St. Francis accepted his proposal with joy, and entered at once into a discussion with him on the fundamental doctrines of Catholicity, insisting, first of all, on *Unity* as a distinctive note of the Church, and which was impossible to Protestants, who recognized no sovereign authority to decide disputed questions, each interpreting Holy Scripture according to his fancy. From this point he went on to develope the whole Catholic system as the organ of the Divine voice; and the more the Baron listened and argued in the contrary sense, the more he was led to see the truth and beauty of that which all

his life he had imagined to be error. In order that their conferences should be undisturbed, they met daily in an oak wood, which skirted a large meadow about a league from the town, and here, walking up and down, they talked for hours on a subject of such vital interest to both. Finally, the Baron was entirely convinced; but he wished to make one more effort to obtain an answer from the Protestant authorities, and therefore begged Francis to draw up a series of "Proofs of Catholic Doctrine," especially of such as had made the most impression upon his own mind, and to let him ask the Calvinist ministers for replies, not by vague declamation, but by succinct and clear reasoning. Although this would delay the Baron's abjuration, Francis consented to it willingly, feeling sure that the result would confirm him more and more in his faith. D'Avully wrote, therefore, to the clergy both of Geneva and Berne, enclosing what St. Francis had written, and begging for categorical answers; but no reply was vouchsafed from either place. Silence, in fact, is the best and wisest course for those who have nothing to answer.

Whilst these matters were pending, another very remarkable conversion took place, which had a great effect on the whole country, and that was the reception into the Church of Pierre Poncet, a famous lawyer, and a native of the town of Gex. He had long been convinced by Francis's words; but the reproaches of his friends, and the fear of losing both worldly possessions and human consideration, induced him to delay for some little time the act of abjuration. But at last, grace overcame all motives of human prudence, and he made a solemn profession of the Catholic faith on the 20th of April, 1596, in the midst of his fellow-citizens, the most eminent of whom he chose as witnesses. The importance of this act may be gathered from the following letter to St. Francis, from his old friend, senator Faber:—"I look upon the conversion of that eminent lawyer, Poncet, as the most important fruit of the glorious enterprise with which Heaven has inspired you, for he is a man of the greatest weight among the Calvinists,—one whom no man dare to call a 'fool,' and whose great talents, clearness of intellect, and sound common sense will convince

the most unreasoning of the truth and solidity of our Holy Faith. When the Baron d'Avully has openly followed his example, I shall look upon your work as virtually done; for they are the leaders of public opinion in this country, and the people are sure to yield to their representations."

The more Francis strove to conceal himself, the more did it please God to glorify His servant, and fame began everywhere to report the glorious success of his Chablais mission. He received many letters of congratulation; among the rest, one from the Bishop of Geneva, in which he calls St. Francis "his son, the staff and support of his old age," and even "his pastoral rod." His former master at Padua, Father Possevin, likewise wrote, and sent him a book on painting and poetry, containing a beautiful article in praise of our Lady; and Father Cherubin, the famous Capuchin preacher, a picture of the Blessed Virgin in the act of adoring her sleeping Infant. Francis, writing to his brother of the pleasure these little presents had given him, adds, "No doubt these holy men, by sending me such presents, hoped to impress Jesus and Mary still more deeply in my heart."

On the 16th of July of this year, Francis had a visit from his two brothers, who had been sent by his mother to cheer him a little. The Saint, ever inventive in all that pertained to God's glory, resolved to have a public dialogue between himself and Bernard, his youngest brother, on the principal points of the Catholic faith. He wrote out the matter in the form of question and answer, putting all the stereotyped Calvinist objections in the mouth of Bernard, as a sort of "Avocat du Diable," and completely demolishing each in his reply. This novel form of disputation attracted, as he hoped it would do, a host of listeners to the church of St. Hippolytus, where he had decided that the conference should take place. The principal stress was laid on the real signification of the name of "Christian" and on the duties it involves. The effect on his hearers even exceeded his expectation. Francis looked at all times on catechizing as one of the most important parts of his ministry, and did it regularly, both in church and in private houses, with wonderful skill and clearness.

The Baron d'Avully was more and more

struck at the never wearying zeal of this great apostle; and having received no answer from his Protestant friends, decided at last to defer not any longer his intended abjuration. Wishing to make the ceremony as imposing and public as possible, he invited not only all the most distinguished inhabitants of the Chablais, but also the principal nobility of Geneva and its neighbourhood to be present on the occasion. It was in the midst of this crowded and august assembly that he made his renunciation of the Calvinist heresy and openly professed the Catholic, apostolic, and Roman faith. Soon after his abjuration Pope Clement VIII. addressed him in a very flattering brief, congratulating him on his happy return to the old faith, and exhorting him that as he had, like Saul, persecuted the Church of God, so he should employ all his talents in future, like St. Paul, in building up what he had endeavoured to destroy. It seems that his wife had been all along a Catholic, and unwearied in her prayers for his conversion, for in this brief the Pope writes, "We share in the joy of your noble wife, whose prayers and whose alms have come up as a memorial before God,

from whom they have obtained the great grace of your conversion to the faith which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

Ever after this on the 4th of October, our Saint made a special commemoration of this event, which he looked upon as a signal favour from God, and as the deathblow of heresy in the Chablais. There was a famous evangelical minister at Geneva named La Faye, who, with Beza, held the first place among the Protestant controversialists of the day. This gentleman wrote to the Baron assuring him that he had been grossly deceived, and offered to come to Thonon himself and openly refute the arguments by which Francis had led him into his present error and delusion. The Baron joyfully accepted the challenge, and settled the time and place with our Saint; but M. La Faye never appeared. The Baron upon this went himself to Geneva to implore him to keep his word; but always without result. At last Francis and the Baron arranged to go themselves to Geneva, and, as it were, force on M. La Faye the conference he had proposed. They took with them the Canon Louis de Sales, the lawyer Ducret, Pierre

Fournier, who was the syndic or mayor of Thonon, and a deputation of the most eminent Catholic and Calvinist inhabitants of the place, so as to ensure impartial witnesses to the dispute in question. On arriving at the house of M. La Faye, Francis announced their purpose, offering to hold the discussion whenever and wherever he pleased, and to let M. La Faye choose himself the subject and matter of dispute. Never was any one more taken aback than the worthy minister at finding himself face to face with the formidable adversary he had provoked. There was, however, no way of drawing back, and so, putting a good face upon it, he accepted the challenge, and met them in a public square called the "Place de Molard," where a conference was held which lasted three hours. M. La Faye, both using and abusing the right given him, attacked all the Catholic doctrines one after the other, no sooner finding himself hard pressed on one point than he left it and went on to the next, and so on for ever. But Francis answered one objection after the other with such clearness and force that he was driven from every position; and at last M. La Faye broke up

the conference in a violent rage, pouring out every kind of insult and abuse on Francis, whom he characterized alternately as pedant, sophist, magician, and false prophet, and as one whose sole aim was to deceive the people and lead them to denying the truth. The Baron answered warmly for his friend that "*that* must be a bad cause which could only reply to solid reasoning by personal invectives;" and turning to Francis openly expressed his sorrow and regret at having been so long the dupe of men like these. Thus ended the Genevan conference, and never was there a greater triumph for the Catholic Church. It is true that some of the old Catholics objected that Francis had borne the insulting language of his adversaries without a word of answer. But the Saint replied, "That as he was come into the Chablais to instruct the ignorant and to announce to those that were in darkness the light of God's truth, he could not do better than follow the example of our Lord, whose teaching was ever tempered by charity and love." He added, "I assure you I never said a sharp thing that I did not repent of it afterwards, for men are far more easily won by tenderness than by severity."

The result of the conference was a still greater exasperation on the part of those who remained rooted in the Calvinist heresy. Despairing of defeating him by fair means, they resolved once more to try foul measures. A Protestant stranger had arrived at Thonon who boasted that he had caused more priests to be put to death in Languedoc and Dauphiny than there had ever been at the great jubilee of Rome. Him they suborned to murder the "Papist Savoyard," as they called Francis. The stranger affirmed that he would do the job in two hours, and asked for his reward thirty dollars (a bitter parody on the thirty pieces of silver!) and a good horse on which he could make his escape after striking the fatal blow. All he asked for was that the money should be paid in advance. This was agreed upon; the villain took both the horse and the purse and then disappeared from Thonon without any one being able to discover what had become of him!

Baffled in their fresh attempts against his life, the enemies of Francis next turned their wrath against his new converts. The Saint himself went about imploring them to suffer all things

with patience and in silence; to overcome the malice of their enemies by invincible meekness, and never to answer their attacks but by a humble and holy modesty. He himself set the example, not only by not replying to the insults they offered him in the streets, but by courteously lifting his hat and bowing to them with all possible gentleness and kindness. Some were surprised; some laughed at him; but the majority were irresistibly won by his wonderful charity and his perfect indifference to human praise or blame. The Saint often repeated to his spiritual children, "Let us suffer with meekness and patience, nay, even with joy, whatever trials and mortifications God may send us; knowing that His mercy standeth sure, and that He who reads the secrets of all hearts will be our stay and support in the day of need."

About this time Francis received a summons from the Duke of Savoy, desiring him to come to Turin to confer with him on ecclesiastical matters connected with the Chablais, and on the best means of completing the work so happily begun. But together with this messenger, arrived a Capuchin father, St. Esprit de Beaume,

charged with a direct commission from the Pope for our Saint to repair to Geneva, and confer with Theodore Beza, the head of the Calvinist party, and to spare no means of winning him back to the Church. This Beza was unquestionably one of the first intellects of his age: he wrote elegantly both in prose and verse, and though at this time upwards of seventy years of age, had lost none of the fire and vigour of youth. Born of Catholic parents and educated as a priest, he became weary of the ecclesiastical state, and, coming to Geneva, fell into the Calvinist heresy, and became one of Calvin's chosen disciples. Very soon the pupil became the rival; and his character so endeared him to the Genevese that they used to say, "They had rather go to hell with Beza than to heaven with Calvin." Latterly it was thought that Beza had conceived doubts as to the tenability of his position, and Pope Clement VIII. was anxious that a man of such wisdom and prudence as Francis should undertake the delicate commission.

Now Francis was in a great strait between the two commands; but, after mature delibera-

tion, decided, in spite of the advanced season, to proceed to Turin, alleging that, though Beza's conversion was of great moment, the salvation of innumerable souls was involved in the conversion of the Chablais, which was almost a certainty, if the Duke of Savoy would only second him with the full weight of his authority. He resolved therefore to start at once on his perilous mission, taking with him only his faithful servant, George Roland. Crossing the great St. Bernard in a bitter north wind, a terrific snow-storm supervened, in which they lost their way,—no guide having been found who would consent to accompany them, and the roads being entirely choked with snow. Several times they fell over precipices and ledges of rock, running the utmost risk of being frozen to death. When discovered by the good monks of the Hospice on the summit of the mountain, they were very nearly stiff and insensible from intense cold. The religious did everything they could to restore them to animation, and St. Francis, as soon as he became conscious, charged Roland to conceal his name and purpose. But Roland had no notion of giving in to his master's humi-

lity, and disclosed to the monks who their unexpected guest was. They treated him in consequence, with every possible demonstration of respect and affection, and did all they could to persuade him to remain with them until the severe season was over, and he could resume his journey in safety. But St. Francis replied that he had his "Master's" work to attend to, and could not delay. As soon, therefore, as the snow-storm had subsided, he started afresh for Turin, and his faith and courage were rewarded by his safe arrival the following day at Aosta.

The Duke of Savoy received him with great honours, and instantly convened his Council to discuss the affairs of the Chablais Mission, to which Council he likewise summoned the Papal Nuncio. He made our Saint detail all his plans, to which he gave the heartiest assent, and desired him to draw up the principal heads in writing for the approval of the senate. This St. Francis did the next day, insisting especially on three things:—The re-establishment of the mass at Thonon; the restoration of the property belonging to the Church; and the appointment of a certain number of priests and preachers, at

fixed revenues, throughout the province. He also urged the establishment of seminaries and schools; the prohibition of heretical and atheistical publications; and the foundation of a House of Mercy at Thonon, both for the reception of destitute converts and for the education of orphans.

After a full discussion of all these matters, for which he obtained the entire approval of the Duke and his Council, and was warmly encouraged by the Papal Legate, Francis took his leave, and hurried back to his "dear flock," as he called them; crossing this time the Little St. Bernard, and enduring much suffering from the severity and inclemency of the season, all of which he bore with joy for our Lord's sake. The Duke had given him three letters: one for the prefect of the province of Chablais; one for the new commander of Allinges, the good Baron Hermance having just before been promoted to another post; and one for the prefect and people of the town of Thonon. To the latter he says, "Nothing do I wish more earnestly than that the Catholic faith should spread and make progress amongst you. Only

profit by the instructions which you will receive; weigh well the arguments adduced on both sides, and I am sure nothing more will be wanted to convince you of the truth of the Catholic Church."

The Saint, armed with these letters, returned to Thonon, and set to work vigorously to restore the church of St. Hippolytus to the state it was in before the so-called reforms, as he particularly wished to celebrate there the midnight mass on Christmas Eve. The heretics, driven to desperation, vowed they would destroy both the church itself and those who dared to take part in what they chose to term "so impious a service." Francis was so little moved by these threats that he at once engaged workmen to proceed with the alterations, putting himself at their head, lest any of the men should be exposed to personal violence. An armed mob surrounded the church so as to prevent the workmen from effecting an entrance; but the intrepid Francis came forward and addressed the crowd with so much sweetness and energy that they at once yielded, and let him enter with his men. The mayor and town council hearing this, ran to the church and exclaimed, "By what right do you dare

erect an altar in this place? Do you not know that by the treaty of Nion this city has been declared free and that you cannot say mass here without our consent?"

"You have no right," replied the Saint, "to oppose the exercise of the Catholic religion. No one forbids your practising your own; we claim the same liberty, by the will of the Prince who is your sovereign."

"The Prince," they exclaimed, "has no authority to deprive us of our rights guaranteed by solemn treaty; and in virtue of those rights we forbid you to go on with your present work." They then drew up a formal protest against his proceedings by the hands of the public notary.

Francis replied, "What you have said and done will not alter my purpose. All I can say is, that in erecting this altar and celebrating mass I have no intention of interfering with your rights, if they exist, upon which point I shall refer to the opinion of the Duke of Savoy. For this purpose I shall write to him to-night, and I advise you to do the same, and we will abide by his decision."

The heretics, conquered by his firmness, were

compelled to yield; but they insisted on the altar being a provisional one of wood. Francis gave up the point, and having set up the altar, which he made as beautiful as his means would admit of, added sacred pictures, silk hangings, candlesticks, and lamps, and had everything ready by Christmas Eve. That feast, so eagerly longed for by the Catholics, came at last, and Francis celebrated the midnight mass, at which they all communicated with transports of joy. After the mass he preached a sermon on the mystery of the day with such touching fervour that the emotion of the congregation could scarcely be restrained. He then celebrated the two following masses with all possible pomp, the last being at nine in the morning, and attended by upwards of 800 Catholics from the neighbouring villages.

From that memorable day the Holy Sacrifice was offered every morning in the church of St. Hippolytus, and high-mass said on all festivals by St. Francis, with the assistance of the priests from the other side of the river, the new missionaries not having yet arrived. Soon after, the answer came from the Duke of Savoy, which was couched in these terms :—

"You have done perfectly right to erect an altar in the church of St. Hippolytus, and there to offer daily the Holy Sacrifice. We approve of all your other good works for the glory of God and the extirpation of heresy. We grieve for the opposition you have met with, and rejoice that it has been surmounted. Go on with the courage and prudence with which you have begun, and be assured of our continual favour and protection."

To the remonstrances of the prefect and people of Thonon the Duke vouchsafed no answer at all, and this settled the question in favour of our Saint and the Catholic cause. A great many Protestants who had held back from fear of consequences, now openly declared their intention of returning to the old faith. In vain the Calvinists raged and plotted; Francis seemed insensible to it all. When Lent began, a furious rabble tried to stone and imprison him on the plea of insanity, because on Ash Wednesday he had put the blessed ashes on the foreheads of his flock, according to the usages of the Church in all ages. But God did not let them harm him, and he passed on his way unscathed. He

had likewise the joy at this time of receiving two whole villages, who came in a bodv to renounce their errors and return to the fold. They besought St. Francis to appoint priests for their restored churches; so that he sent his cousin Louis of Sales to Brens, while at Allinges he established a famous preacher named Pierre Montjounier, a man as much distinguished for holiness as for ability. About this time St. Francis published a little treatise on the Blessed Eucharist as a refutation of the various heresies promulgated on this subject; which treatise gave mortal offence to M. Viret, who took exception especially to the expression of our Lord's having been born contrary to nature of a "pure virgin." His furious declamations on the subject, which disgusted even the Protestants, elicited another pamphlet from St. Francis, in which he proved that the purity of Mary was expressly foretold by the prophet Isaiah in the passage, "that a virgin should conceive and bring forth a son;" and further supported his arguments by extracts from St. Augustine and St. Ambrose. Viret's conduct in this matter was condemned even by the Calvinists; and the mayor of the

town, Pierre Fournier, disgusted with the violent personalities which Viret substituted for arguments, went to St. Francis and declared his intention of abjuring his heresy on the spot. St. Francis took him to St. Hippolytus, and there, in presence of the whole town, received him into the Church. The Calvinists followed them with sticks and stones, and some of those who formed the procession were wounded; but St. Francis again succeeded by soft words in turning away their wrath.

Fournier, not content with this act, drew up a formal letter of submission to the Holy See, in the name of the principal inhabitants of the town of Thonon, who repudiated the title of Protestant, and declared themselves now to be a Catholic majority. This still further exasperated Viret, who resumed his violent declamations against the Church, declaring that the mass was sheer idolatry and that the doctrine of the Real Presence destroyed the symbol and analogy of faith. Francis upon this published his 'Devout Meditation on the Apostolic Creed,' whereby he clearly proved the mystery of the Eucharist to be in conformity with all that the Apostles

propose to our belief. Towards the end he added an anagram of his own name in French, signifying that the strength of faith was incapable of diminution: "Francoy de Sales *Foy sans decaler.*"

It is impossible to give an idea of the immensity of his labours at this time. In the "Oratory" Life of St. Francis we find this beautiful description of his work:—"In proportion as the number of Catholics increased, so did the conferences and instructions, and he alone was able to give them; it is, however, a characteristic of Charity to do that which seems impossible. Preaching, hearing confessions, holding conferences, visiting the sick, writing, assisting at funerals, going in quest of the poor in the vilest huts,—these were his daily labours. Nor were his nights devoted to repose; he spent them in study, writing, and prayer, very often not taking off his clothes to lie down, and availed himself also of this time to carry the Blessed Sacrament to the sick, in order that he might not be exposed to the insults of the heretics by day. In vain his friends warned him to take care of himself. His invariable

answer was 'that it was not necessary he should live, whereas it was necessary that souls should be saved;' adding, 'Love renders labour sweet, and those things easy which appear impossible; those who love can well understand that where there is true love no toil can weary us.'"

In one of his letters describing the variety of his occupations at this time, he says, "In reality these functions are various, but the *intention* with which they are done is but one; it is love alone which stamps the difference on the price of our actions and exercises. Our Divine Saviour was equally the beloved of His Father in the garden where He humbled Himself, at the marriage of Cana where He was exalted, on Thabor where He was transfigured, and on Calvary where He was crucified, because in all these circumstances He honoured His Father with the same heart, the same submission, and the same love. Let us then endeavour to have a true love which may make us seek nothing but the good pleasure of our Lord. This will render our actions beautiful and perfect, however common and insignificant they may seem to be; for it is the intention which sanctifies the whole."

But St. Francis had not forgotten the Holy Father's commission to repair to Geneva, in order to confer with the famous Calvinist minister, Beza; and so, having put affairs at Thonon on a good footing, he started on his delicate mission. It was no easy matter to obtain an interview with the old man, for his house was surrounded with people, many of whom had already begun to suspect his orthodoxy, and had threatened St. Francis with death if he attempted his conversion. Having, however, recommended the success of his enterprise to God and redoubled his fasts and austerities for that end, our Saint went boldly forward; and finding Beza alone he entered into conversation with him on indifferent topics, until, irresistibly charmed by the sweetness of Francis's manner, the Calvinist minister begged him to come into his private room; upon which the Saint frankly explained his object, and asked Beza the simple and straightforward question, "Whether he thought a man could be saved in the Catholic Church?"

Beza begged for a little time to consider, and went into the next room; but, returning after a quarter of an hour's interval, answered with

hearty sincerity, "That he believed a man might be secure of salvation in the Church of Rome." To which Francis replied, "Then why establish your pretended Reform?" and proceeded to refute in succession the different allegations of the Calvinists, especially as regarded Holy Scripture and the necessity of good works.

Beza was convinced but not converted. However, he implored the Saint to return again on some future occasion, which he did twice; the first time accompanied by his old friend President Faber. Fearing that the whole time would be occupied in frivolous talk, Francis suddenly asked, "What those books were in a corner of the room covered with dust?"

Beza answered that they were "only the Fathers, on whom he laid no great store."

"And I," rejoined the Saint, "cannot easily express how highly I esteem them." Taking up one of them, he wiped off the dust with his cloak, and found it to be St. Augustine. Opening it at hazard his eye fell on a passage regarding grace and justification, on which he spoke so movingly that Beza took his hand and pressing it said, "I assure you, if I am not in the right

path, I daily beseech our Lord in His infinite mercy to bring me back to it."

The following visit Francis paid alone, and, dropping all questions of controversy, besought Beza to think of his own soul, and to return to his childhood's faith. Lest money should be a difficulty, he had been empowered by the Pope to offer him an annuity of 4000 gold scudi and the value of his library and house at Geneva, which would compensate for any loss he might sustain at the hands of the Calvinists.

Beza was much moved at the Saint's representations, but again deferred giving a decided answer, saying, "that though he believed Catholics were right, he did not despair of salvation in the communion to which he then belonged." St. Francis told him he would give him time to reflect on the proposal he had made, and left him far more hopeful than before. But his visits had aroused the suspicions of the Genevese, and a watch was set round the old minister to prevent Francis having access to him again. Later, Beza strove to elude their vigilance, and obtain another interview with the Saint; but it was peremptorily refused him, and

when, in presence of some of the leading Calvinists, he began to make a recantation of his heretical views, they gave out directly that study had affected his brain and that he was gone mad. He died soon after in their hands, but in great distress of mind; the only thing he obtained being that he might be buried in the Catholic cloister of St. Peter's, where no Calvinist had ever rested. Licentiousness was the principal cause of this miserable man's delay in responding to the grace so freely offered him. Des Hajets, Governor of Montargis, relates that one day when he was alone with Beza, he asked him suddenly after dinner, "What on earth made him stick to the Reformed sect?" Beza was silent, but then, going for a moment out of the room, returned with a very beautiful young lady on his arm, saying, "This is the motive which binds me to my religion!" So hopelessly do passions of this sort blind the wisest of men to their true interests.

If Francis failed in his ultimate object in these Genevese visits, the risk he ran was compensated to him by many wayside pleasures. After his very first visit to Beza's house, he met a soldier

belonging to the garrison of Allinges, who told him that at the house of one Abraham Joly there was a Catholic at the point of death. The Saint flew to the house, found the poor man in the state which had been described, and, turning his nurses out of the room with so much dignity and yet sweetness that they dared not resist, heard the poor man's confession, and gave him the supreme consolation of absolution and communion in his dying moments.

Francis had gone to an inn on his arrival, and asked for a private room where he could rest a little, having been up all night. A poor Catholic servant-girl who waited on him took the opportunity of making her confession. The Saint asked her if she would not wish to communicate, which the girl supposed impossible as she knew the Saint did not dare celebrate mass in the town. But Francis explained to her how he carried the consecrated particles in a small case hung round his neck; and, making her prepare, he told her that their guardian angels would act as clerks, and gave her the Holy Communion. It would be difficult to describe her joy and consolation, as well as his,—although

death would have been the inevitable consequence had the puritanical Genevese detected him in the act of administering the Sacrament in the very heart of their Babylon. This young girl, whose name was Anne Jaqueline Favre, became afterwards portress in one of the Saint's Convents of the Visitation, where she was much esteemed for her purity and innocence, and the many spiritual favours she obtained from God.

Don Lorenzo Bertrand relates that on one of these visits to Geneva, Francis was shown the council-chamber, where there hung a portrait of Calvin, under which were these words:—

"Hoc vultu, hoc habitu Calvinum sacra docentem,
Geneva felix audit;
Cujus scripta piis toto celebrantur in orbe,
Malis licet rigentibus."

Francis could not conceal his disgust at such ill-bestowed praise, and altered it with three words:--

"Hoc vultu, hoc habitu Calvinum insana docentem,
Geneva demens audit;
Cujus scripta piis toto damnantur in orbe,
Malis licet rigentibus."

His mission at Geneva fulfilled as far as it was then possible, Francis went from thence to

Annecy, to confer with his Bishop, and give him a faithful report of his proceedings; and then, after a flying visit to his father and mother at the Château de Sales, proceeded to Chambéry to confer with the Count de Martinengues, who had been appointed Viceroy over the whole of Savoy, with orders to do everything in his power to re-establish the Catholic Faith. He stayed at the house of his old friend the senator Faber, who gave him at once letters patent from the Duke empowering him to raise in the different parishes of the Chablais sufficient revenues to support the priests already established in that country and any others who might be subsequently appointed; together with the restoration and care of the churches formerly belonging to the Catholic Church in those parishes. By this means St. Francis found himself in possession of sufficient funds to be able to procure the services of a large body of zealous missionaries whom he established in the different districts, among whom were some famous preachers and canons of the cathedral,—men as eminent for their personal holiness as for their ability.

One of the few remaining valleys which still

clung to the Calvinist heresy was that of Bellevaux, and St. Francis resolved to go himself there, taking with him Claude Chevalier, one of the most fervent of his new missionaries. They were very ill-received by the inhabitants, who treated them, as usual, as sorcerers and magicians. No one would allow them to enter his house, and it was only by paying an exorbitant price that they could procure a little coarse black bread, such as is given to dogs, with some mouldy cheese, and some water, as no one would sell them any wine. Even this poor food they were obliged to eat sitting on the ground, as they could not obtain the loan of a chair. To St. Francis this sort of reception was nothing new; so, turning smiling to his companion, he exclaimed, "Now we have a specimen of the real apostolic life." Claude shared in his brave, hopeful, patient spirit, and remained there undiscouraged by so unpromising a beginning; and he was rewarded by a harvest which, at the end of a few years, surpassed his fondest expectations. The first act of St. Francis, when he had succeeded in re-establishing the Catholic Faith in any parish, was to plant a great cross on the village-green,

and thus take possession of the country under the banner of Christ crucified. After visiting several of these outlying missions, Francis returned to Thonon, where his presence was urgently needed to quell a popular tumult. The famous Capuchin preacher, Père Esprit de Beaume, had been giving a series of lectures on points of controversy, but not having the wisdom of our Saint, he exasperated the Calvinists to such a degree that his life was in danger. Francis, hearing of the tumult, ran to the public square, where he found the poor Capuchin surrounded by a frantic mob of men, women, and children, who were mingling blows with cries and imprecations. The dignity of his presence, the sound of his voice, and the loving sweetness of his persuasions succeeded at last in allaying the storm. Madame de Vallon, who was present on this occasion, declared that it was the unutterable meekness and gentleness of the Saint which had this wonderful effect, and that his face shone with such divine love as to awe and melt the most rabid of his adversaries.

On another occasion the wonderful power of our Saint was shown when two gentlemen were

about to fight a duel. Francis heard of it, and flew to the spot. Already the combat had begun, and deadly blows were being exchanged on both sides. "Gentlemen," he exclaimed, "will you lose your souls for a miserable point of honour?" But the quarrel had been too violent, and the combatants, disdaining any reply, continued to fight with the ferocity of wild beasts. Seeing this, Francis, who was strong and active and himself an expert swordsman, threw himself between them at the risk of his life and succeeded in separating and disarming them; after which he spoke to them both so earnestly, and at the same time so touchingly, of the enormity of the sin they were about to commit, that the gentlemen, ashamed of their quarrel, renounced their intention, asked pardon of each other, and entreated the absolution of the Saint. One, who was particularly moved by his entreaties, forsook the world and retired to a country house which he possessed in the neighbourhood of Thonon, where Francis constantly visited him, and instilled into his heart sentiments of humility, compunction, and charity, to which he had hitherto been a complete stranger. He was a

man of high birth and position, and had a wide reputation for courage and skill in all warlike exercises, so that his house was a *rendezvous* of the principal nobility of the country. To them he was never weary of speaking of St. Francis, and at last stimulated their curiosity to see and hear him for themselves. From henceforth this château became the scene of a succession of conferences, which had the most important influence on the minds of those who shared in them. One evening in particular, one of the company touched on the oft-repeated Protestant reproach that "Catholics ignored the mediation of our Lord, or at least imagined that of our Lady and the saints to be equally efficacious." St. Francis, moved out of his usual equanimity by this assertion, replied, "The doctrine of the Catholic Church on this head is clear and undeniable; that Jesus Christ, God and man, is alone capable of offering to God condign and sufficient and infinite satisfaction for our sins. So far from destroying His mediation, she publicly professes to owe everything to it alone."

This statement of the true doctrine of the Catholic Church amazed the Calvinists present,

who had been led to believe exactly the reverse, and inclined them to listen with greater attention to St. Francis's equally lucid reply to the rest of the stereotyped Protestant objections against the true faith; objections which are the same in every age and country, and become often so ingrained in the minds of men that scarcely an angel from heaven would bring conviction of their falsehood. "For three hundred years," says Le Maistre, "history has been one vast conspiracy against truth;" and in England especially random assertions are not wanting to keep up the Elizabethan tradition against Catholicism. Yet even here, as in the Chablais in St. Francis's day, truths brought forward calmly and clearly, without irritation or bitterness, insensibly make their way among honest men, and bring forth fruit, slowly maybe, yet surely, in God's own time and way.

But St. Francis found it impossible to go on with his work without more labourers; for which purpose he attended a synod held at Annecy, and implored the Bishop to appoint him one or two coadjutors for this important mission. The Bishop instantly acquiesced in this demand, and

sent a Jesuit father, named Jean Saunier, and two very eminent Capuchin preachers, Chérubin de Marienne and Esprit de Beaume, the former of whom had been for a long time the Saint's great friend. They held a conference at Annemasse, a hamlet about a league from Geneva, which had always remained faithful to the Church, on the best way of completing the work in the Chablais which had now been so happily begun; and it was then agreed that Father Chérubin should at once proceed to Turin and propose to the Duke the celebration of the "Forty Hours'" Exposition at Annemasse, feeling that this beautiful and touching devotion would have a great effect on the minds of the people. The Duke highly approved of the proposal, and gave them not only money but a great variety of beatiful and costly church ornaments for the purpose, so that the religious ceremony should be solemnized with the greatest possible magnificence; while the Papal Nuncio, who was likewise at Turin, showed his hearty approval of the undertaking by a present of two hundred dollars. The Duke, being unable to assist at the function in person, desired M.

d'Albigny, Governor of Savoy, to appear as his representative. The Bishop instantly sent out a circular announcing that the "Forty Hours" would be celebrated at Annemasse on the 7th, 8th, and 9th of September. In order to make the ceremony more attractive to the common people, Francis, by the advice of his coadjutors, resolved to inaugurate the meeting with a representation of some scene in Scripture history, for which purpose the sacrifice of Abraham was chosen. The care of this piece was confided to Louis de Sales, and the Père Chérubin devoted himself to preparing the little theatre, which was set up in the principal square of the town. The day fixed upon for the ceremony was the first Sunday in September, which happened to fall this year on the 7th, the eve of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. The inhabitants of Geneva, alarmed at the prospect of so large a number of Catholics being assembled at their very gates, sent out small bodies of troops to occupy the principal roads, hoping thereby to intimidate the pilgrims, who were preparing to flock from all parts to Annemasse. But Francis determined, in spite of these hostile preparations, to

make the faithful of Thonon and the neighbouring villages walk in procession with him to the spot (which was at about four or five leagues distant), bearing solemnly the cross at their head, so as to make public reparation to Jesus Christ crucified for the insults heaped upon this emblem of our redemption for the last sixty years. He mentioned his plan to M. Lambert, the new governor of Allinges, who highly approved of it, and promised to follow himself in the procession. Then he convoked the Catholics at Thonon, and told them of his intention and its object, which surprised them very much, as hitherto they had never dared do more than have quiet religious services within the church of St. Hippolytus. However, they all came very readily into his views, and on the morning of the 6th assembled at an early hour in the church, where St. Francis celebrated mass; after which the procession was formed in order, and the signal given for the start. A cross of wood had been prepared, but when the time came, no one had the courage to carry it, for fear of the heretics. Francis quietly desired George Roland to be its bearer, reassuring him by saying

with a smile, "Of what are you afraid? I am going with you, so that if we must die, we will die together." Then the procession intoned the "Vexilla Regis," with the Litany of the Saints, and started; George Roland leading with the cross, and the Saint, in white surplice and stole, bringing up the rear. As they passed through the different villages, the Catholics ran out and joined them, so that Francis soon found himself in the middle instead of the end of the procession. They arrived without the slightest let or hindrance at Annemasse, where they were met by the Confraternity of the Brothers of Mercy from Annecy, with a distinguished body of gentlemen and clergy, the Canon Louis de Sales being at their head. The two cousins wept with joy at the meeting. Then the whole procession went into the church, prayed a few moments before the altar, and afterwards dispersed for the night. The following morning the Bishop, Claude de Garnier, sang the High Mass, and administered the Holy Communion to a very large number of the congregation. Then St. Francis went up into the pulpit, and made a pathetic opening discourse on the Blessed

Sacrament. The procession was subsequently formed to carry the Host to the magnificent tabernacle prepared for it, and the Père Chérubin next addressed the assembly. The Confraternity of the Cross remained for the first hour's Adoration, and were succeeded by one religious body after the other during the whole "Forty Hours'" Exposition, different eminent preachers taking it by turns to address the people. On the high-road from Annemasse to Geneva there was a stone cross, called "La Croix Philliberte," in honour of the man who had first erected it, with two statues of marble on either side representing our Lord and the Blessed Virgin. The Calvinists had broken down this cross, and nothing remained but the three circular rows of marble steps which formed the pedestal. The Catholics were not rich enough to replace it by one of stone or marble, but they brought one in wood, which the Bishop, being too infirm to do it himself, commissioned St. Francis to bless with the office proper to the occasion. He fastened on the base the following quatrain, which he had himself composed :—

"Ce n'est la pierre ni le bois
Que le Catholique adore ;
Mais le Roy, qui, mort en Croix,
De son Sang la Croix honore."

The evening of that day the Confraternity of the Cross bore it in procession to the spot, chanting the "Vexilla Regis," and accompanied by the Bishop and a great concourse of people. The cross being duly placed in the socket prepared for it and raised in its proper place, the Père Esprit de Beaume addressed the spectators on the honour to be rendered to this sign of our salvation, of which the sight should bring to mind the infinite love of God, who shed the last drop of His precious blood for the redemption of men. This sermon was eagerly listened to, not only by the Catholics but by a great many of the inhabitants of Geneva, who had thronged to the spot from curiosity, but of whom a good number were led thereby to see things in a different light from what they had done before, and were subsequently received into the Church. The number of Catholics present on this occasion was upwards of thirty thousand, but so admirable were the arrangements which had been previously made by St. Francis that no instance

occurred of disorder or confusion; and in spite of the machinations of the Genevese, who tried to prevent supplies of food from coming into the village, an abundance of provisions poured in from other quarters, so that every one was pleased and satisfied. Little printed sheets were distributed among the crowd, on what was meant by the worship of the Cross, which had also a great effect in removing Calvinist prejudices. The following evening upwards of seven hundred converts from the township of Ternier joined the procession, to the great joy of the Bishop, by whom their arrival was unexpected; and the Père Chérubin, in his address to them, took occasion to repeat an assertion he had formerly made, *i. e.* "that he and his colleagues had advanced no doctrine that they were not prepared to support in any public conference with their adversaries, but that hitherto the Calvinist ministers had eluded all attempts on their part to bring the question to an issue by honest and open discussion." This assertion nettled the Protestant party in Geneva very much, but finding it impossible to persuade their clergy to enter the lists with St. Francis and his

colleagues, they made the inhabitants of Berne join with them in a protest against these proceedings to the Duke of Savoy, coupled with a threat of declaring war unless the "mischievous Capuchin," as they entitled Père Chérubin, was silenced and sent out of the country. The Duke of Savoy was not in any way intimidated by the menaces of the Bernese, and, on the contrary, wrote a letter to congratulate the Père Chérubin on his success, and also to St. Francis to rejoice with him on the glorious result of the "Forty Hours'" Exposition. The Protestants, finding themselves thus baffled at every point, resolved to give up their open resistance; but they induced M. La Fay to publish an answer to the little paper on the 'Worship of the Cross,' full of gross misrepresentations,—to call them by no harsher name. St. Francis was ordered by his Diocesan to refute this work, which he did in a book called 'The Standard of the Holy Cross.' He divided his subject into four parts. In the first he treated of the name of the Cross, its power, and the reasons why it should be honoured; in the second, of the manner in which it was depicted by the ancients, of the apparition to Con-

stantine, and its similitude to the brazen serpent; in the third, he defines the sign of the Cross and its power against devils; and in the fourth, of the honour paid to the Cross; "showing that Catholics were unjustly blamed for the respect they show both to that and to other outward things, because it is not absolute, not having for its end those objects taken materially, but only relatively as being interiorly referred to God. He concluded by declaring that the Church aimed at nothing but preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified, that she ever sees Him on His cross, and that she would never glory in aught but in the Cross of our Lord." This book made an immense sensation, and none of the Calvinists ventured to answer it. It was reprinted at Paris under the title of 'Pantologia,' to the great disgust of our Saint, who abhorred grand titles, and exclaimed when he heard of it, "An architect must be a fool who would make the door larger than the mansion."

On his return to Thonon, Francis occupied himself more diligently than ever in his pastoral work. A great many little traits are recorded of

his simplicity and humility; as, for instance, on one occasion when he had torn his clothes he went into his room to mend them. A man of high rank, and one of his recent converts, wishing to speak to him and finding his door ajar, went in without knocking or being announced, and to his great surprise found Francis sitting on the floor doing a work which he thought ought to have been left to his valet. This gentleman could not help saying so, and expressing his astonishment "at such an unusual proceeding in a person of his birth and position." At which the Saint replied laughing, "I really see nothing unbecoming in mending that which I myself have torn." The nobleman was so struck by the answer that he went away more than ever confirmed in a faith which brought forth such real fruits.

Francis continued to frequent the house of the Seigneur de Blonay, one of his earliest converts, whose château was the home of all the poorer Catholics, besides being a regular refuge for the sick, the destitute, or the suffering. The husband and wife vied with one another in their prodigal charities and in the tender care they

bestowed on their poor guests. After a time Madame de Blonay died, leaving nine children; and her husband, according to an agreement mutually signed by this devout couple in life, embraced the monastic state. St. Francis was excessively fond of these children, especially of the youngest girl, Aimée, whom he called "La Cadette." He instructed her from her very cradle in all matters of faith and practice, and his tender care was rewarded by an almost passionate devotion on the part of the child. She used to hide herself in the curtains when he fancied she had run away to play, so as to be able to watch him quietly while he was talking to the others, and declared afterwards that his face always appeared to her exactly like the face of an angel. He taught her a quantity of little sacred hymns and songs, with which his memory was well stored, and as she grew older her mind insensibly took the bent of his. Writing to her father many years after, St. Francis said, "I love 'La Cadette' as if she were my own child, but our paternal duties are different. It will be yours to give her a dowry, and mine to give her a place in the service of God."

The Père Chérubin zealously seconded St. Francis's efforts for the good of the people, but he was of a very different character. Energetic, ardent, impetuous, burning with the love of God, he yet wanted the wise prudence and gentle meekness of our Saint which overcame in such a wonderful manner the opposition of their adversaries. A little anecdote will serve to show the character of the intrepid Capuchin.

The Church of St. Hippolytus had been ceded altogether to the Catholics since the number of the converts had so greatly increased: but, though the Protestants had retired for their services to the Church of St. Augustine, they claimed the right of still using the bells of St. Hippolytus to summon their congregation. This was wormwood to the Père Chérubin, who, having obtained an edict to that effect from the Duke of Savoy, took advantage of the temporary absence of Francis from Thonon on a missionary tour, to go into the belfry with the Père Esprit de Beaume and two lay Catholics, and, drawing up after them the ladders and the cords, to wait there till the hour appointed for the Protestants to ring for their service. The Calvinists duly ar-

rived as usual, but found the church door shut and the belfry equally closed. Breaking open the door, they found themselves certainly within the steeple, but without the possibility or means of ringing. The Père Chérubin then appeared from the little platform above, produced the order and authority from the Duke, and said it was, after all, not fair that the same bells which announced the preaching of truth should likewise announce that of error. This speech made the Calvinists still more furious. They fired on the Père Chérubin, and then tried to mount with fresh ladders, which were, however, continually thrown down by their adversaries above; and at last became so exasperated that they resolved to sap the actual foundations of the belfry, when M. de Vallon, a Protestant gentleman much respected by all parties, arrived at the scene of action. He calmed the excited populace, and then begged the Père Chérubin to come down and thus end the strife. But the latter answered him from a window that he could not contravene the orders of the Duke; and then spoke with such unction and zeal that the mob withdrew and left the belfry in possession of the

Catholics. But it was with the intention of avenging later the insult which they pretended they had received. That night they returned stealthily and secretly to the church, and having lit a great fire under the bell, broke it to pieces with strokes of the hammer. They had previously muffled it in a blanket to prevent the strokes being heard. The Père Chérubin, however, was wide awake, and hearing people in the belfry, ran to Claude Marin, the procurator-fiscal, and implored him, as the *employé* of the Duke of Savoy, to come and protect the rights of the Catholics. The heretics were furious at having been discovered, and began showering down burning brands on their adversaries. Claude Marin was half inclined to give up the matter, but Chérubin said with great firmness, "We are under the protection of the Blessed Virgin. Let us mount boldly; they will not hurt us." They mounted the ladder accordingly, and found the principal burghers of the town, and the big bell broken to pieces. The procurator-fiscal ordered them, on the part of the Duke, to leave the belfry and give him up the keys; and then calling the captain of the archers,

with a body of his men, insisted on the authors of this outrage carrying the fragments of the broken bell themselves to the Château of Allinges to found therewith fresh bells,—which remain to this day.

About the end of the year 1597 the town of Annecy was attacked by a contagious disease which rapidly spread to all the neighbouring villages. Francis devoted himself to the care of the sick and dying, quoting the example given by St. Charles Borromeo when the plague raged at Milan as an answer to those who implored him to think of his own life. He very nearly fell a victim to his burning charity, having caught the fever while attending some unusually pestiferous cases whom no one else would approach, and for whom he had performed all the last offices with the tenderness of a brother. Want of food and the enormous fatigue he had previously undergone had predisposed him to take the infection, and after a few days' illness his life was despaired of. The Bishop and all the people besieged Heaven for his recovery, which was so instantaneous after the public prayers which had been offered up on his behalf,

as to give rise to the belief in a directly supernatural interposition. The Saint wrote himself to his mother, "The prayers and wishes of Monseigneur and of my kind friends here have brought me from the gates of death. May I use the life God has given me back more faithfully in His service!" The Bishop, full of thankful joy, insisted on his spending the time of his convalescence with him at his villa of Salaz; and there, being compelled to take thorough rest, both of body and mind, he rapidly regained health and strength. Here they received the joyful news of the Treaty of Vervins, by which the Duke of Savoy was reinstated in all his dominions. This peace was brought about mainly at the instigation of the Legate, Alexander de Medicis, Cardinal of Florence, who afterwards became Pope under the title of Leo XI. Nothing could so greatly tend to the conversion of the whole of the Chablais, and St. Francis determined to have a public thanksgiving and the "Forty Hours'" Exposition at Thonon to commemorate the event. The Duke and the Pope highly approved of the proposal, the former promising to defray all expenses, and

the latter to grant a plenary indulgence on the occasion.

Whilst these arrangements were pending, the great work he had at heart did not stand still, and the receptions into the Church increased day by day in numbers and importance. There was a Protestant gentleman, named Ferdinand Bouvier, a relation of the Marquis de Lullin, who had long been noted for his violence and intolerance. This man, one day, hunting with his cousin in the woods near Bellevaux, came upon St. Francis sitting on a stone, surrounded by an eager and attentive body of listeners, to whom he was giving a simple and yet touching exposition of the Faith. The dogs, as much surprised as their masters, stopped short, half cowed at this unexpected game; and the gentlemen, moved by curiosity, got off their horses and joined the group round the preacher, whose words had such an effect upon De Bouvier that he began for the first time to doubt the reality of his own position. Stumbling, soon after, on a book of Duplessis Mornay, the cleverest writer among the Calvinists, against the sacrifice of the Mass, he took it to St. Francis, who completely exposed the falsehood of

the arguments it contained, and so entirely convinced him that he made his public abjuration soon after in the presence of the Bishop.

No insults deterred St. Francis from his noble purpose, and no imputations of lukewarmness could make him swerve from the line of meekness and charity towards his adversaries which he had laid down for his guidance. One day, coming out of church, an impudent Calvinist came up to him and said, "It's all very well for you to talk of presenting the left cheek if you have been smitten on the right; but if I were to give you a box on the ear, I doubt very much if you would practise what you preach."

St. Francis, without being in the least ruffled or annoyed, gently replied, "My brother, I know very well that I might fail, for I am a man laden with sins and infirmities. But if I do not correspond with the grace of God, or with the words of the Gospel which teach me to bear injuries patiently, the same Scriptures tell you to go by the words of Christ, and not by my poor acts; and, above all, to follow the example of our Divine Lord, who gave, not only his cheek, but his whole body, to the lashes of his persecutors."

His nephew, Charles Augustus de Sales, speaking of his saint-like uncle at this time, says,—

"He never alienated any one by harsh or bitter words, saying that '*it was not our Lord's way*;' and that even in a human point of view, it did not answer, for men's feelings and, above all, their pride, required to be humoured. He asserted that it was an incontestable truth that much more was obtained by love than by rigour, and that he had never employed reproaches or invectives without repenting of it afterwards."

Pierre Camus, Bishop of Belley, also writes:—

"Our beloved father caught more flies with a spoonful of honey than others with tons of vinegar. His favourite text was, 'If any one be a disputer among you, let him know that such is not our custom, neither that of the Church of God.' In addressing the Protestants he always spoke of them as 'brothers,' and when asked the reason, he answered, 'that St. Augustine and other Fathers made use of the same expression in speaking to the heretics of their day; that the Protestants are our brothers by baptism; and that those to whom he spoke

were his fellow-citizens likewise, and in that sense doubly his brethren.'"

About this time the Bishop sent the Père Chérubin to Barraux, to confer with the Duke as to appointing St. Francis of Sales his coadjutor. This negotiation was not difficult, as the Duke had already decided in his own mind that St. Francis should be Claude de Granier's successor; so that letters patent were issued on the 29th of August, 1598, appointing him coadjutor, with a reversion to the bishopric on Claude de Granier's death, and speaking in the most flattering terms of the rare qualities of our Saint; the whole affair being begun and ended without his knowledge. This proceeding reflected great credit on Claude de Granier, as he had a nephew, the only son of his favourite sister, a man of noble family and great piety, who had long been occupying the post of Vicar-General, and who was universally supposed to have been chosen by the Bishop as his successor. But the Bishop, thinking of nothing but the good of his diocese, shut his eyes to all considerations of family or friends, and chose St. Francis as the man most eminently fitted for

the post. And the nephew himself, a worthy imitator of his uncle, did everything in his power to bring about the same result.

The mother of our Saint, about this time, sent him a message to implore him to come and meet her and his brothers and sisters at the Château of Brens, as there were several family affairs which required his advice and settlement. But St. Francis replied, "Tell my mother that I am afraid her loving proposal is a temptation from the Evil One, for there are here so many children of God, who are my brothers and sisters in grace, that I cannot, without being unfaithful, leave my work among them for the sake of any natural or family ties." This was an heroic act of self-denial on the part of St. Francis, who loved his mother with a passionate devotion, and almost broke his heart at her death; but he never hesitated to sacrifice all human affections to his duty to his Master, so that the family had to go back to the Château de Sales without seeing him even for one day.

It was also during this year that God deigned still further to manifest the holiness of His servant by the gift of working miracles. There

was a Calvinist woman living at Thonon in the Faubourg of St. Bon, who had a great personal liking for our Saint, but refused absolutely to listen to his arguments or to leave the religion in which she had been born. During this time she had several children, and among others a boy whom she passionately loved, but whose baptism she, from carelessness, deferred. This child died suddenly, and the mother, inconsolable, carried it for burial to a cemetery in the parish set apart for unbaptized children. On her way she met our Saint, and, throwing herself on her knees in an agony of tears, she placed the open coffin at his feet and exclaimed, "Give me back my child, Father! Give me back my child, if only for sufficient time to receive Holy Baptism." St. Francis, greatly moved, could not speak, but kneeling down by the little coffin, he besought God with many tears for both the mother and the child. His prayer was scarcely ended when the child opened his eyes and gave signs of life. The father and mother and all the family were overwhelmed with joy. They instantly besought St. Francis to baptize it, which he did; and the child lived

for several days afterwards and was seen by the whole town, so that the truth of the miracle was beyond dispute. The poor mother implored soon after to be received into the Church, as well as her whole family, and they became the most zealous and devoted among our Saint's children.

Everything was now prepared for the "Forty Hours'" Exposition at Thonon. The church of St. Augustine had been given up to the Catholics, as well as that of St. Hippolytus, and the Bishop reconsecrated it, bringing back the original altar-stone, which had been carried to the Hôtel de Ville when the Bernese had established Calvinism in the place. Then the Sacraments of Confirmation and Ordination were administered, for the first time for sixty-three years; and the Bishop likewise consecrated a number of crosses, to be set up in the village-greens and at the corners of the high-roads throughout the country. The day fixed for the opening of the "Forty Hours" was the 20th of September, 1598, and on that morning an enormous crowd assembled from all quarters. After the Blessed Sacrament had been carried

in procession through the town, it was placed in an oratory erected for the purpose in a square at the back of the church of St. Augustine. Very soon a crowd came up, consisting of no less than three hundred people, inhabitants of Bellevaux, all begging to be admitted into the Church. The Bishop received their abjuration with joy. St. Francis had just been assisting at a representation of the fall of the manna in the wilderness, and took occasion to draw the comparison between that and the Blessed Sacrament, as the "true bread from Heaven," taking for his text the gospel words in the Parable of the Supper, "Compelle intrare." This sermon also caused the conversion of a great number of his hearers.

The inhabitants of St. Cergue arrived next, bearing with them a cross which had been concealed by them between two walls during the Calvinist persecution, and which cross remains in the hamlet to this day. It is of copper, all stained with dirt and verdegris, but religiously preserved by the people untouched and uncleaned. Some of these poor people arrived barefoot bearing other emblems of the Passion of our Lord,—the spear, the nails, the crown of thorns, etc.; and having

arrived at the oratory, one of the band spoke so movingly of the sufferings of Jesus that the listeners were moved to tears. Then came the people of Bonneville, with the nobility of the Chablais, at the head of whom was the Governor, Jérôme de Lambert. He was an old soldier, of great bravery and of the highest character, and meeting St. Francis near the door of the church, he fell on his knees, like a little child, at his feet, exclaiming "Father, we are all your children, bless us, and offer up our sacrifice of prayer and praise to God." St. Francis, making him rise quickly, embraced him, and led him to the Bishop for his blessing; after which they both remained for a long time in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

One portion only of the procession arrived later than the rest, and that was from the village of Ternier. They had been delayed by the fanatics of Geneva, who had attacked them as they passed, their road leading them just under the ramparts of the town, so that it was with some difficulty that they had escaped out of their hands. St. Francis received them with redoubled kindness, and spent the greater part

of the night in cheering, instructing, and confessing them. During the whole "Forty Hours" of Adoration, prayers, meditations, catechizings, and sermons succeeded each other without intermission; while outside, theatrical representations of sacred subjects were given, to impress on the peasants the full solemnity of the occasion. The personal love which all the people felt for St. Francis, together with his tender and touching exhortations, gave an additional impulse to the devotion of the spectators. Whole villages took the opportunity of returning to the faith of their fathers; and when the Exposition was over, the Bishop and St. Francis had several hard days' work in receiving such numberless abjurations and administering to them the rites of conditional baptism and confirmation.

When the Duke of Savoy heard of the result of the meeting, he exclaimed, putting his hand on the cross which he wore as grand master of the order, "God be praised! I will spare nothing, not even my blood, for the completion of this grand work, that the Cross of my Lord may reign supreme throughout my dominions."

He sent large alms to St. Francis for distri-

bution among the poor of the different converted districts, and great was the joy of our Saint at being able thus to relieve so much misery and suffering. The circumstances and condition of all were known to him, and his tender and delicate charity took off all weight of obligation from the receivers.

On the 28th of the same month, the Duke announced his intention of coming himself to Thonon: but it was with dismay that the Calvinists likewise heard that it was his determination to punish with the utmost severity those who had taken part in the outburst of 1594, when they had endeavoured to throw off their allegiance to the house of Savoy, had demolished his castle, and put all the Catholic garrison to the sword. The pressure of other wars had hitherto prevented the Duke's avenging this insult, which he now announced his intention of doing, and that without mercy.

The Calvinists hurriedly summoned a council, and, in their distress and consternation, could think of no other means of averting his wrath than to employ the mediation of the Bishop and St. Francis between them and their justly

incensed sovereign. For this purpose they went in a body, with M. de Vallon at their head, to the Bishop's palace, and implored him with tears to plead their cause. The Bishop was at dinner, but, hearing of their errand, instantly rose, and taking St. Francis with him, put himself at the head of the Protestant gentry, and went out to meet the Duke, who was already close to the gates of the town. On seeing the Bishop, the Prince got off his horse and took his hand with the greatest expression of affection and reverence, kneeling at the same time for his blessing. But what was his surprise and astonishment when the Prelate threw himself at his feet and with tears implored mercy for the guilty persons who were accompanying him, declaring that "he should not rise till he had obtained their pardon." The whole body of magistrates, kneeling, awaited his reply in silence. The Duke, who was of a severe nature and who had been extremely offended at the conduct of the heretics, yet could not withstand the pleadings of the venerable Bishop for those who had been his greatest enemies; and, raising him from the ground, assured him that for his sake and for

that of the "Apostle of the Chablais" (as he called St. Francis, who was kneeling by the Bishop's side,) the past should be forgotten, and that so beautiful and touching an example of forgiveness on their part compelled his imitation. The Bishop thanked him in the warmest manner, dilating on the love the Duke had always shown to his people, and assuring him that the inhabitants of the Chablais were ready, as loyal and dutiful subjects, to do everything in their power to welcome their sovereign. The Duke was much gratified, and said he would be guided in all matters by his advice and that of St. Francis, whom he then accompanied into the town. This affair contributed more than anything to touch the hearts of the Calvinists of Thonon; and their president, M. de Vallon, at once decided to return to the Catholic Church.

On the 29th St. Francis begged to go into retreat for twenty-four hours to prepare himself for preaching. He told his cousin, the Canon Louis de Sales, that he had never felt greater distraction or spiritual dryness than at that moment; but that he was not thereby disturbed or made anxious, for that he was quite sure that

if it were for God's glory He would Himself put into his mouth the necessary words; and that if, in His wisdom, He thought fit to humiliate him by failure, it would equally work out His divine purposes,—therefore he offered himself simply to God for either one or the other.

The following day the Bishop, St. Francis, and the rest of the clergy went to meet the Papal Legate, accompanied by the Duke of Savoy and the rest of the nobility. They met him about a league from the town, and took him in procession to the church of St. Hippolytus, where he prayed for some time before the Blessed Sacrament. After the Adoration the Duke conducted him to the Hôtel de Ville, where a magnificent lodging had been prepared for him. Here he presented the Bishop and St. Francis, saying, "Your Eminence, this worthy Bishop is the Father of this Diocese, whose authority I would support, if need be, with my life." Then, taking the hand of St. Francis, he continued, "This is the real apostle of the Chablais, a man who, I verily believe, has been sent to us direct from God. Burning with zeal for the salvation of souls, he began his work

alone in this country at the imminent risk of his life. He sowed the good seed, and planted once more the Cross which the powers of hell had overthrown. I have tried to second his holy enterprise with my sword, but no one can deny that all the glory of this great work is due to the indefatigable charity of Francis de Sales."

St. Francis, whose humility was confounded at these unexpected words, knelt at the feet of the Cardinal and kissed the hem of his robes; but the Legate, raising and embracing him, exclaimed, "Go on, my brother, with your noble work, and may you complete it with the same ardour with which you have begun. I shall not fail to give a faithful report to our Holy Father the Sovereign Pontiff of all you have done for the salvation of souls."

Francis's modesty suffered terribly at these unexpected honours; he became crimson, and his confusion was so great that he only answered by bowing low, and remained in profound silence. He always considered himself as an unprofitable servant, but his humility only increased the Cardinal's appreciation of his merits.

The Calvinists could scarcely conceal their surprise, for they had no idea that the Duke entertained so high an opinion of the zealous missionary. St. Francis escaped as soon as he could from the congratulations of the Court, and begged the Père Chérubin to deliver the inaugural sermon the following day, saying that "all these fine speeches had so confused him that he could not face so august an assembly."

The nave of the church of St. Augustine had been hung with rich tapestry and cloth of gold, with violet velvet round the pillars. A magnificent throne faced the pulpit, likewise draped with cloth of gold. The choir had been arranged in the form of a chapel, with a multitude of columns placed in a semicircle, the dome being studded with gold stars, and in the centre was placed the altar, with a magnificent tabernacle covered with lights, flowers, and precious stones, in the midst of which the Blessed Sacrament was to be placed, the Legate having wished for a renewal of the "Forty Hours'" Exposition.

The following morning, being the 1st of October, the Duke took the Cardinal first to the

church of St. Hippolytus to receive the abjuration of a certain number of distinguished Protestants, at the head of whom was the famous Calvinist minister, Petit, who made a touching and eloquent address to the Legate, giving the three principal reasons which had induced him to embrace the Catholic religion,—first, its unity; next, its sanctity; and thirdly, its Apostolical succession. He then knelt at the feet of the Legate, who, dressed in pontifical vestments, sat on a throne in front of the High Altar, the Duke, the Bishop, and all the other ecclesiastics occupying seats behind him according to their rank,—and then and there Petit made his formal abjuration, followed by the Lord of Forny and a multitude of eminent persons of both sexes. The Legate made them a little address expressing his great joy on the occasion, and then gave them formal Papal absolution and benediction.

When this part of the ceremony was concluded, a magnificent 'Te Deum' followed. Then the Bishop of Geneva celebrated pontifically the High Mass, after which the Blessed Sacrament was borne by him and deposited in the mag-

nificent "reposoir" of the church of St. Augustine, and the "Forty Hours" began. The new ostensorium had been given by the Duke of Savoy, and was encrusted with pearls and diamonds. The dais was carried by the Duke of Savoy, by his brother, and by other noble and illustrious personages. The Cardinal Legate with the rest of the prelates followed immediately after, and an enormous procession of laymen bearing lighted tapers. At the corner of the street a triumphal arch had been erected, with a temporary altar to serve as a station. As the Cardinal passed under this arch a cloud which had been suspended above it suddenly opened, and a white dove flew down from it, bearing two tiny notes in her beak written in letters of gold on a blue ground. One was for the Legate in Latin, and contained these words:—

"Major Alexandro, triplices de Marte triumphos
Unus agis, pacem restituisque tribus.
Palladis optatâ stringis tres fronte coronas.
Victor et assertâ religione redis.
Hic tibi pro meritis trinus qui regnat in ævum
Tergemino sacrum cinget honore caput.

The other was for the Duke, in French, as follows:—

"Grand Prince, dont le zèle et la valeur mérite
Un bonheur aussi grand que vous avez le cœur,
Le Ciel qui vous chérit, sous ma Sainte Conduite,
Vous rend, en pleine Paix, plus qu'en guerre, Vainqueur."

A discharge of cannon followed, amidst the smoke of which the procession arrived at the church door. Here a representation of Mount Etna had been set up as a symbol of the Church of Jesus Christ. From the summit poured out fire and flame, while from the base flowed a pure and limpid stream. The meaning of this allegory was to represent the invincible rock of Christ's Church throwing up continual flames of love and charity towards Heaven, while on the earth she pours a perpetual torrent of vivifying and purifying water.

The church of St. Augustine was lit with innumerable wax lights from pavement to roof; and after the benediction, the Père Chérubin preached the opening sermon on that passage in the 105th Psalm, "Quis loquitur potentias Domini, auditas faciet omnes laudes ejus?" applying the words to the marvels of the Blessed Sacrament, and maintaining the doctrine of the Real Presence with as much force as clearness. The Cardinal was, however, disappointed at

not hearing St. Francis, so the Bishop told him that it was humility alone which had made our Saint yield his place to the Capuchin Father, but that he would now send for him, and that the next sermon should be in compliance with the Cardinal's wishes. St. Francis obeyed the summons, and in a series of eloquent discourses not only electrified his hearers, but answered the many objections which had been raised by the Calvinists against the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament: taking for his texts those which were wrested by the heretics for their own purposes:—"Caro non prodest quidquam." "Spiritus est qui vivificat." "Verba quæ ego locutus sum vobis spiritus et vita sunt," etc. When the Cardinal had listened to one or two of these sermons, he exclaimed to the Duke, "I no longer wonder at the prodigies this man has wrought."

Each of the processions passed by the great square and stopped opposite the Hôtel de Ville, where a new and beautiful stone cross had been erected, at the foot of which the Père Chérubin had sunk a little bronze crucifix in a tiny niche, being the one always used by St. Francis when

he began the Chablais mission, and below was a little tablet on which were engraved the self-same "four lines" which St. Francis had written for the cross at Annemasse. The Père Chérubin wished it to serve as a perpetual memento of the "Apostle of the Chablais" (which was the title already given him by the people), and as a proof of his own enthusiastic love and admiration for our Saint.

Among the numberless abjurations which were received this day was one of an old and venerable man, ninety years of age, who had been brought up as a Catholic when a boy, but had afterwards been forced, sorely against his will, to conform to the new Calvinist heresy. When he got into church and was about to receive the absolution, he could not resist his transports of joy, and, bursting through the crowd, threw himself at the feet of the Legate with the energy of a young man, using the words of Simeon, "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace." The Legate and the Duke were both deeply touched at the old man's fervour, and overwhelmed with joy at the numbers and devotion of the people, of

whom upwards of twenty thousand came by turns to share in the Adoration. The night before the close of the Exposition, the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, dressed in white with a red cross on their breasts, erected another magnificent crucifix in the street which bears the name, to replace one which had been destroyed in the same place by the Calvinists. The Duke himself assisted at the operation; and when the cross had been firmly fixed, he knelt at its foot, kissed it, and remained a long time in fervent prayer. The Père Chérubin preached again on the honour to be rendered to this emblem of our salvation; and, speaking of the white cross which was emblazoned on their shield, took occasion to praise the zeal of the Princes of the House of Savoy in its defence and in choosing it as their standard, whereby they had followed the example of Constantine the Great.

The personal devotion of the Duke greatly edified the whole of the people. Before the Blessed Sacrament he refused to use the gorgeous *prie-Dieu* prepared for him under the dais, but went and knelt humbly among the

poorest of the peasants at the bottom of the church. A procession and benediction, as before, closed this solemn function, and the whole town was illuminated with coloured lamps, torches, candles, and pots of fire, so that the night seemed as light as the day.

The Legate left Thonon the following morning full of joy and thankfulness at what he had seen and heard. But the Duke remained, in order still further to consolidate the good work begun by the missionaries. Two ambassadors had been sent from Berne to request him to allow the free exercise of the Calvinist heresy in his dominions. The Duke gave them an audience, but said to them :—

"When you took possession of these provinces, you did not hesitate to compel the people to abjure their faith and to adopt your new heresy. Now, therefore, that by force of arms, as by solemn treaty, this country has been given back to me, and that the greater portion of my subjects desire to return to the faith of their fathers, you cannot be surprised that I, as their legitimate sovereign, should exercise my right to restore them to the unity of the Church."

The ministers of the Duke were frightened at these bold words, and represented to him that war would inevitably ensue, so he convened a special council at which he summoned St. Francis to appear. It was on the 4th of October, and consequently the feast of his Patron, St. Francis of Assisi, to whose intercession our Saint earnestly commended himself for Heavenly light and guidance in this delicate and difficult question. The council having assembled, the ministers gave their opinion, and proposed as a compromise that, conformably to the treaty of Nion, the Duke should permit three Protestant ministers to remain, one at Thonon, one at Bons, and the third at Nernier.

The Duke listened in silence, and then commanded St. Francis to give his opinion.

"Your Royal Highness," said the Saint modestly but firmly, "is not compelled by the treaty of Nion to any such compliance. By having these heretical teachers in the province, my idea is that you will run the risk of losing not only the country but Heaven itself."

Then the Duke rose, and addressing his council, said calmly, "My mind is made up.

Let us have less of earth if need be, but more of Heaven. The Calvinist ministers must leave the country. I will hear no more of the matter."

On the ambassadors from Berne being readmitted, he announced his decision, and when they pleaded for the retention of at least the three ministers as proposed by the council, the Duke said, "Very well; they may remain, on condition that you will receive the priests whom I will send to Berne."

The ambassadors, not daring to accede to this proposal, took leave of the Duke and returned to their own country. The government of Berne were furious at this proceeding on the part of the Duke, and instigated Queen Elizabeth of England and the Protestants of France and Holland to write letters of remonstrance on the subject. They also sent him threatening messages, menacing him with war for infraction of treaty. But the Duke's only answer was to issue letters patent on the 12th of October by which all civil employments were awarded to Catholics, all ecclesiastical lands and endowments were to be restored to the Church,

and all people daring to insult or ill-use those who professed the Catholic faith were to suffer fine and imprisonment at the pleasure of the judge. Before issuing these letters he had convened a meeting of the Calvinists of Thonon in the Hôtel de Ville, in which he endeavoured to persuade them by every motive, civil and religious, to conform to the faith of their fathers; but towards the end he said sternly, "Let those who wear my white cross on their breasts, or in their hearts, go to my right, and those who persist in the black colours of heresy, and prefer the schism of Calvin to the Cross of Christ, pass to the left."

A complete silence followed these words, but the Duke's command was imperative, and he was not in a humour to be trifled with. The largest number went to the right, but a good many still persisted in turning the other way. St. Francis flew to these last, imploring them to consider the consequences of their act, and, at any rate, to listen to the instructions of those who could really give them proofs of the truth of the Catholic faith. His gentle persuasions had their effect on several of his hearers, who

passed over to the right of the Duke; but a little knot remained obstinate, among whom were Brotti, Joly, Després, and one or two burghers of the city. To them the Duke now turned with indignation, and said, "You wish to see if I am in earnest and to have a proof of my anger? Very well. Leave this room. I give you three days to settle your affairs and leave the country; if, after that, you return and are found in my dominions, imprisonment will be your portion."

Not content with what he had been doing at Thonon, the Duke went over every portion of the Chablais, and in each village after his arrival, he convened the inhabitants, and, speaking to them as a father to his children, entreated, exhorted, and persuaded them to return to the Church. He conjured them to think of their souls, and proved to them that he could have no other interest but theirs in the steps he was taking. His gentleness and love, in which he was seconded by St. Francis, who accompanied him in this progress through his recovered dominions, did more than severity to accomplish the end so earnestly desired by both. The

peasants came with one voice crying out, "We wish to be of the faith of our fathers and of our good Prince." This enthusiasm spread through the whole country. The people flocked in crowds to meet him as passed, crying out, "Vive son Altesse Royale! Vive l'Église Catholique!" When he arrived at any place, the Duke's first object, like that of St. Francis, was to restore the cross which had been broken down, and then to consecrate anew the soil in which heresy had been so long rampant. St. Francis, writing to the Pope of these proceedings, extols the prudence, gentleness, and forbearance of the Duke as much as his zeal and courage, and says, "that the hand of God was visibly with him in this campaign, so that he turned the heart of the people as one man, and acted, not only as a sovereign, but as a pastor, announcing to his flock the eternal truths of Christ's Kingdom upon earth."

Towards the end of this year, the good old Bishop, Claude de Granier, was present at a theatrical representation, given by the students of his Theological College, in which, among other things, was a scene representing wolves

in sheep's clothing, devouring the lambs. This little incident made a profound impression upon him: he dreamed of it all night, when it seemed to him that the wolves were hopelessly ravaging his flock. In vain he tried to save them; he could not, single-handed, cope with the numbers of the enemy. In his nightmare, he cried out aloud to the other shepherds to come and help him. His almoner, Hilaire Furier, who slept in the next room, ran in to see what was the matter. The Bishop woke in a fright, and told him of his dream. "Alas!" he continued, "it is too true that my fold is surrounded with ravening wolves, and I am getting old, and have not strength to repulse them alone; where can I look for help?" His almoner, to calm his agitation, talked to him of the flourishing state of his diocese, especially of the blessing Providence had vouchsafed to him in giving him so many excellent priests, mentioning particularly St. François de Sales, a man after his own heart, who was virtually his coadjutor in his labours. The poor old Bishop, at the mention of his name, exclaimed, "Where are you, my son? Why will you not have pity on my

grey hairs?" The remainder of the night he turned over in his mind the best way of inducing St. Francis to consent to his wish, and by daybreak, summoned him to come to the palace. Francis obeyed, never dreaming of his object. As soon as he was arrived, the Bishop embraced him tenderly, and conjured him to come and help him, and consent to be his co-adjutor. Our Saint, colouring, replied, "Your Grace's goodness blinds you to my defects. It is not that I shrink from the work, but I am quite unfit for the dignity. You have, in your diocese, priests of the greatest piety and ability, who by their birth and talents are infinitely more capable than myself of filling so arduous a post. I beseech you, therefore, to forgive my refusal." In vain the Bishop besought him to alter his decision. St. Francis was inexorable: and taking leave of the prelate returned to the Château de Sales. The Bishop was disappointed, but not discouraged. He told his canons of his project and implored their aid. The whole chapter concurred in his views, and promised their co-operation. The Bishop then went to the Château de Sales to induce M. de

Boisy to help him to overcome the objections of his son; but the prayers of his family had as little effect on Francis as all the rest. His friends joined their solicitations to those of his family and the Bishop, but with the same result. Whilst this affair was pending, Colonel Brotti and the other banished Protestants, weary of their exile, besought the intervention of St. Francis with the Duke to obtain permission to return to their own country; which permission was, after some difficulty, obtained by our Saint. Colonel Brotti came to thank him, and, in the course of conversation, showed him a commentary lately published by Beza, the Calvinist preacher before mentioned, on the Book of Joshua. St. Francis pointed out to him a passage in which the author asserts that Calvin was the first person who had explained the real meaning of the words of our Lord at the Last Supper, and added that M. Beza thereby acknowledged that his doctrine was not that of the Apostles or of the Fathers of the Church, and that in consequence it could not claim the merit of either antiquity or Catholicity. Colonel Brotti was puzzled, and begged to take the

book back to Geneva to show the passage to M. La Faye, and ask for an explanation. Francis highly approved, and Brotti went directly with the book in his hand to M. La Faye. The Calvinist minister was completely taken aback, regretted the expression, and assured him that he would take care that the passage should be erased in all future editions. In the course of conversation, Brotti spoke of some of the essential differences between the Churches, and adduced several of St. Francis's arguments in favour of Catholicity. M. La Faye gave evasive answers, and finally allowed that there was certainly salvation in the Roman Church. This interview settled the question with Colonel Brotti. He returned to St. Francis, begged to be instructed in the Catholic faith, and soon after made his abjuration, together with his two friends, to the great joy of the Duke, who instantly reinstated him about his person.

The peace of the Chablais was a little troubled about this time by a missive from the King of France, who declared that the city of Geneva had been included in the Treaty of Vervins. Now no conditions had been made with the

Genevese on the subject of religion, and two points were essential: the one that they should allow the Catholics the free exercise of their religious rites; the other, that the ecclesiastical benefices unjustly usurped by them should be restored. The Bishop thought it necessary for St. Francis to go to Rome to negotiate this matter, and also to enforce the restitution of the lands belonging to the Church throughout the Chablais. He sent him in the first instance to the Duke, who highly approved of the proposal, and said to our Saint, "Now that you have asked so many favours for others, ask for something for yourself. It will be strange if I cannot give you a proof of my good will!"

The Saint, bowing low, replied, "I only beseech your Royal Highness to listen to me whenever I may have to plead for the interests of the Church, or of your faithful Catholic subjects." This disinterested conduct still further won the admiration of the Court, and confirmed the high idea the Duke already entertained of our Saint. He exclaimed to those about him, "If God would deign to form a band of soldiers as able, as devoted, and as zealous as the Apostle

of the Chablais, the Church would reign triumphant all over the world; but of that we are not worthy!"

The Saint gave a fresh proof of his generosity and disinterestedness soon after, when Claude Marin sent him an order to reimburse himself out of the restored benefices for the expenses he had incurred during the four years of his mission in the Chablais; but Francis refused to accept a farthing, and begged it might be applied to the reparation of the Churches, and the maintenance of fresh pastors.

Soon after this, the Duke returned to Piedmont, leaving behind him the odour of his virtues and good example, and the conviction that nothing had been left undone, on his part, to secure the worship of the Catholic faith to his people. But time rolled on, and the poor Bishop saw himself as far off as ever from the wish of his heart, which was the coadjutorship of St. Francis of Sales. At last he determined to make one more effort, and sent his almoner, Pierre Critain, armed with letters patent, not only from himself, but from the Duke of Savoy and the Cardinal de Medicis, urging his accept-

ance of the dignity, and desiring him no longer to resist that which was manifestly the will of God and of his superiors.

The Abbé Critain arrived one evening at the Château de Sales, and said nothing of his mission. The next morning he proposed to Francis to recite their office together in the portico of the castle, and when they had finished, he asked him "if he guessed what was the object of his visit?" Francis replied in the negative. Critain then unfolded the object of his mission, to which St. Francis listened with great attention, but replied, "I beseech you to tell our dear and venerable Bishop, that deeply as I feel his goodness and the honour he has done me, the charge is beyond my strength and my merits. Tell him also, that with a coadjutor, he would lose a portion of his revenues, which are not sufficient even now for his maintenance; that I am not fit to be put in authority, only to obey. Explain to him that I am ready to do what he wills; to come and go; to write and preach; to spend and be spent; to give missions or labour at Annecy; anything and everything he wishes, but not to accept a bishopric."

The Abbé Critain replied, "Beware lest you resist not only the express wishes of your superiors, but the distinct will of God. In choosing you, the Bishop has shut his eyes to all claims of family or blood; he has taken a year to deliberate on the matter, so that no one can accuse him of undue precipitation; he has consulted every one whose opinion was worth having, and his suggestion has been universally approved of. The voice of the people is the voice of God; you are bound to listen to it." St. Francis, after this appeal, sighed and said, "Let us go to the church and each of us say the mass of the Holy Ghost. I will serve yours and you mine. We will invoke our Lord and do what He inspires." After their masses, St. Francis remained for a long time prostrate at the foot of the altar. The Abbé, looking at him, attested that he was like a man in an ecstasy, and that his face shone with a bright and marvellous light. At last he got up and silently left the church. "Well!" exclaimed the Abbé, "what have you learned from the Holy Sacrifice?" St. Francis, looking down, sadly replied, "Tell our reverend father, the

Bishop, that I have never had the least wish for this dignity for the reasons I have already given; but as he so earnestly desires and orders it, I am ready to obey and to serve God in the position he has chosen for me. If I do any good, it will be owing to his prayers; but I must entreat of you to say nothing to any one here of what has passed between us."

The Abbé Critain, overjoyed at his success, hastened back to Annecy, but could not help revealing to M. and Mme. de Boisy the happy result of his mission. On arriving at the Bishop's palace, he found him in the midst of a numerous company, as it was one of his reception nights; but coming up to kiss his hand, he whispered in his ear that the provost had given his consent. At this news, the Bishop burst into tears of joy, exclaiming out loud, "Till now I have never done anything of any use; but now that I have obtained my dear son, Francis of Sales, as my coadjutor and successor, I feel I have conferred the greatest possible blessing on my whole diocese."

The joyful tidings spread through the town, and when Francis arrived, he was overwhelmed

with congratulations. The enthusiasm with which he was received made him determine to hurry as much as possible his departure for Rome, where urgent affairs demanded his presence and intervention. But God had decreed that the faith and patience of His servant should be still further tried. On the very eve of his departure he was seized with violent fever, and, after a few days, the bad symptoms increased so rapidly that his life was despaired of. His mother flew to nurse him, and to her was given the bitter charge of announcing to her son the imminence of his danger. Her deep grief would have seemed to make this mission impossible; but on such occasions women are generally braver and stronger than men. Her faith and courage triumphing over natural feeling, she knelt by his bedside, and announced to him calmly and tenderly the opinion of the physicians. St. Francis's first feeling was one of overwhelming contrition for the sins of his past life. This pure and beautiful soul reproached itself bitterly for the slightest omissions of duty, and could see nothing but imperfections in what appeared to others a

mirror of holiness and devotion. He thought he had not given himself enough penance for his faults, and exclaimed in the words of Job and Ezekiel, "Suffer me a little while, O Lord, that I may bemoan my grief before I go to the land of darkness from whence there is no return; for I have sinned and have not done meet penance. Too grievously have I sinned; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul, and will say unto God, Do not Thou condemn me; where shall I hide myself from Thy anger? In the midst of my days shall I go down to the gates of hell? Shall my life be thus cut off by the Weaver before it is fully spun?" Thus did he lament himself with bitter tears, and said to his mother, "Ah! if God should restore me to health, how earnestly would I strive to make a better use of my life, and do more to cause His name to be glorified!" It is impossible not to tremble at the picture which this scene in St. Francis's life gives us of the tenderness of conscience implanted in those who are living in the closest union with God; and comparing it with our insensibility to, and imperfect realization of the dangers of our own state, viewed in the

light of God's sanctity and of His terrible judgments. But, after some hours of this mental agony and bitter contrition, accompanied with a full confession of his whole life, confidence returned to his heart, and the voice of God's minister pronouncing the solemn words of absolution seemed to bring back to him faith and hope, and even joy. He burst out in the words of the Psalmist, "All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth. O my soul, why art thou so afflicted? Hope in God, for I will now and for ever confess that He is my Saviour and my God." From that time peace returned to his soul, and with it an entire surrender of his will to God, either to live or to die according to His good pleasure. Turning to his mother, he consoled her with loving and soothing words, professing entire confidence in the merits of his Saviour, and strengthening her to accept cheerfully whatever God might appoint; saying earnestly, "I place myself without reserve in His hands. He Who has so loved me as to die for me will wash me in His precious blood." Madame Boisy's grief was stilled and awed by the loving faith with which these words were

uttered, and from that moment the mother and son spoke but of that home to which sooner or later each would arrive, and united their wills with the adorable will of God, strengthened by His love to bear and to suffer and, if need be, to part for a time, in the sure and certain hope of reunion in the presence of their Lord.

The news of his illness, in the meantime, spread the greatest sorrow and consternation throughout the town and diocese, and the poor Bishop fell dangerously ill from grief, and was confined to his bed. He ordered the prayers of the whole Church to be offered up on St. Francis's behalf, and would not be content without sending every hour to know how he was going on. The canons of the Cathedral went in a body to take leave of their venerable Provost, and to ask for his blessing. They knelt by his bed, and, with voices broken by emotion, expressed their fear that God, to punish them for their unworthiness, was about to deprive them of his help and counsel, and loving presence. St. Francis, much moved by their expressions of affection towards himself, spoke to them long and earnestly on the emptiness of life, and the

motives which should impel them to a continual preparation for death, urging them to place their whole confidence in the Great Pastor of Souls, and not to think of *him* "poor, miserable worm (as he said), who had never been aught but an unprofitable servant." The effect produced by his words on this occasion was incredible. Often as they had heard him speak in public, he had surpassed himself in the touching love and unction of this his apparently dying exhortation. They implored his blessing and a few words of separate instruction and counsel, which he gave to each, in spite of his weakness, showing the most wonderful and almost intuitive knowledge of the temptations and difficulties which beset each particular soul, and suggesting the most efficacious remedies. They withdrew in tears, but the effort had been too much for our Saint, and scarcely had the Chapter left the house than he fell into a fainting fit, which lasted a whole hour and appeared to be the precursor of death. Every remedy was tried in vain, and those round his bed imagined the end was come. But in this apparent exhaustion and lethargy, his mind was

alive, and God permitted him to be assailed by the most violent temptation against the Faith. The Devil presented to him a subtile objection against the mystery of the Real Presence in the Eucharist. Francis, weakened by illness and feeling that he could not cope with his adversary in his present state, contented himself with continually making acts of faith. By this means, and by mental invocation of the name of Jesus, he overcame all the artifices of the enemy, and the temptation left him. Whenever in later years this thought assailed him, he made the sign of the cross; but when he recovered, he never would speak of the temptation or its solution to others, lest it should prove a stumbling-block to some other soul; only his cousin Louis de Sales knew of the matter, and to him he recommended the strictest secrecy.

The following day he appeared to be a little better, and the cathedral choir came into the room adjoining his own with their instruments, and begged to be allowed to cheer him by singing some of their sacred hymns. St. Francis was pleased, and begged for the anthem in which the Church celebrates the ardent love

of the Magdalene for her Divine Lord. He made fervent acts of love during the singing, although his voice was too weak to be able to join in the music. They then chanted at his request the 41st Psalm, "Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum." When they were gone, Francis turned his face to the wall and with many tears repeated the "Miserere." But God, Who had thus proved the faith of His servant, listened to the many and fervent prayers poured forth on his behalf, and restored him to his mourning flock. The doctor prepared a wonderful remedy for him, called "The golden potion," of which the substance resembled honey and gum. The Saint, who had recovered consciousness, asked him what he was doing. The physician replied in the words of our Lord, "Quod ego facio tu nescis modo, scies autem postea." St. Francis, who could not bear the slightest symptom of irreverence in anything pertaining to God, reproved him for these words, saying he should never profane anything in Holy Writ for common purposes, and still less make use of the words of Christ. He swallowed the potion in some broth, and soon

after fell into a gentle and natural slumber, from which he woke refreshed and better. From that moment he improved daily in health and strength, and very soon was as well and strong as he had ever been before, to the inexpressible joy of the Bishop, of the whole diocese, and of his holy mother, who had so tenderly watched by his sick-bed, and cheered him as much by her lively faith as by her loving offices.

Having recovered his health, St. Francis started for Rome accompanied by the Bisop's nephew, Monsignor de Chizé, Canon of the Cathedral. They stayed two days at Turin to obtain letters of recommendation from the Duke, and then proceeded to Modena, where they found Francis's old friend President Faber. Here St. Francis's horse fell just as he was entering the town, and so covered his master with mud that he was compelled to go to an inn to have his clothes cleaned and dried, not possessing a second suit; thanks to the voluntary poverty which had been his choice and his earnest desire. While waiting alone during this operation (his companion having gone out to see the lions of the place), God was

pleased to expose him to a singular and unexpected temptation. His door opened and a young and beautiful lady appeared, who endeavoured in every possible way to attract and fascinate him. St. Francis at first gravely and coldly repelled her advances, but finding this line of conduct had no effect on her, rung for his servant, and desired him to conduct the lady to her own apartments, saying "that she had evidently mistaken her room." His anxiety to conceal her sin did not blind Roland's eyes to her motive; and the Saint took the occasion, on their subsequent journey, to talk of the moments of danger and temptation to which we are each of us exposed at different seasons in life, God so permitting it to make us feel our own weakness and give us a greater distrust of ourselves. On his arrival at Rome, Francis went at once to his old friend the Cardinal de Medicis, who welcomed him with the greatest joy, and at once presented him to the Pope. The Holy Father was delighted to see one of whom he had heard so much, and granted him all that he desired. His principal objects, as he had previously explained to the Duke, were to obtain the restitu-

tion to the Church of all ecclesiastical property in the Chablais, and the establishment at Thonon of a religious house which should embrace various objects, *i.e.* a residence for secular priests serving in the town, a home for missionary preachers who should go backwards and forwards throughout the province, a college for the instruction of youth and the preparation of candidates for holy orders, and a house of refuge for such among the converts as were too poo or sick to earn their own living. The Pope appointed St. Francis prior of this house, and our Saint drew up a series of constitutions for its government as full of wisdom and prudence as all that emanated from his pen. To this "holy house," as it was afterwards called, the Pope, at the request of St. Francis, added a Confraternity under the title of "Notre Dame de Compassion," whose business was both to help in the conversion of the Calvinists and to relieve want and suffering and sorrow of every sort in the province. Our Saint failed only in one thing, and that was in his wish to transfer the seat of the bishopric and chapter from Annecy to Thonon, for which purpose he applied for the

cathedral church and convent of the so-called "Hermits" of that town. It is not known for what reason this proposal was refused.

Whilst St. Francis was entirely absorbed in matters connected with the interests of the Church in the Chablais, Canon Chizé presented to the Pope the petition of the Bishop, the Duke of Savoy, the clergy, and all the people, for the confirmation of Francis's appointment to the coadjutorship of Geneva and the reversion to the bishopric,—a petition received with the greatest gratification by the Holy Pontiff, but which was presented to him during the temporary absence and without the knowledge of Francis himself. The Pope admired the entire silence which our Saint had maintained on the subject during the many confidential audiences he had granted to him, and now sending for St. Francis spoke to him openly on the matter, expressing his joy at the Bishop's choice, and desiring Francis to return to him in three days to be examined in his presence.

Francis had no reason to shrink from the examination, but it startled him as being contrary to precedent, the Bishop of Savoy, like

those of France, being exempt by special privilege from this ordeal. He represented this to the Count de Verva, the Duke's ambassador at Rome, so that no umbrage might be taken at so unusual a proceeding. The ambassador asked for an audience of the Pope, but the latter explained the matter by saying he had only asked Francis to submit to the examination for his own honour, as he wished to judge for himself of the talents of that extraordinary man, which would also so greatly raise him in the estimation of the College of Cardinals. The Saint, therefore, received orders to appear, and having no time to get up the required subjects and no books to refer to, he made up his mind to prepare solely at the feet of the crucifix, and by penance, fasting, and prayer, together with the sacrifice of the Mass, to offer himself simply and humbly before his judges. As he passed before the church of St. Giacomo Scozza-Cavalli, on his way to the place of examination, he entered, and kneeling down offered up the following prayer with many tears:—"O my Lord, if Thou foreseest that I shall become a useless servant in the episcopacy and that I

shall not be fit to govern souls that are so dear to Thee, I beseech Thee not to permit me to answer correctly, but rather so ordain that my ignorance may be made manifest, that I may be covered with confusion in the presence of Thy Vicar, and that this examination may be to me a source of ignominy." It was with these feelings that he entered the hall and found himself in the presence, not only of the Sovereign Pontiff on his throne, but also of the cardinals, among whom were De Medicis and Borghese (both afterwards Popes), and about twenty archbishops and bishops, besides doctors, generals of different orders, abbots, and the like. A Spanish prelate, who had on the same occasion to appear before them, was so appalled that he fainted away, and had to be conveyed home, where he died the following day. The Saint, whom this little incident might naturally have unnerved, remained perfectly calm and undismayed, kneeling at the Pontiff's feet. He was asked whether he would be examined in law or theology, and having chosen the latter, the Pope, who was himself a very learned man, opened the examination, which was carried on

by the rest, till thirty-five questions had been proposed to him, all of which he answered with such clearness and ability that the examiners were perfectly astonished. Cardinal Bellarmine was among them, and disputed one point hotly with our Saint, in which, however, he was finally compelled to yield. The Pope, having begun, wished likewise to close the examination, and asked him, "Whether bishops could absolve from heresy?" Francis replied in the affirmative, quoting the decree of the Council of Trent. The Pope, who had just revoked this power by a recent Bull, replied, "Son, it is not thus that we understand it." The Saint bowed humbly and instantly answered, "Most Holy Father, if your Holiness does not so understand it, neither will I thus understand it henceforward." The whole assembly were in admiration at this act of humility after such a display of wonderful learning. As for the Pope, impatient to express his delight, he rose from his seat and, warmly embracing him, exclaimed, with tears in his eyes,* "Drink water out of

* "Bibe, fili mi, aquam, de cisternâ tuâ, et fluenta putei tui; deriventur fontes tui foras et in plateis aquas tuas divide."

thy own cistern, and the streams of thy own well; let thy fountains be conveyed abroad, and in the streets divide thy waters." (Prov. v. 15.) The cardinals and prelates, as well as the Holy Father, loaded him with praises and honours; so that the Saint who had only prayed for confusion, was crowned by our Lord with glory. Francis, writing to his cousin of the affair, says, "God did not subject me to confusion, as I expected, and did not humble me as I deserved. Chizé quitted the Consistory far more elated than I. This friend is but too anxious to write to Savoy, and give an account of the paternal goodness with which his Holiness has honoured me, and which obliges me more than ever to be an obedient son and an affectionate servant of the Holy Roman Church. Whatever he may write of me, remember it is the characteristic of benevolence to exceed in speaking well of one's friends, as it is of one's enemies to exaggerate one's defects. In fine, what we are before God that we are, and no more."—26th March, 1599.

Francis, while waiting for the drawing up of the briefs necessary for his mission, became in-

timately acquainted with some of the most eminent men at that time in Rome, among the rest with Juvenal Ancina, a learned oratorian, who had just been made Bishop of Saluzzo. Juvenal had been immensely struck at the Saint's answers at his examination, and when St. Francis modestly disclaimed any particular credit, he exclaimed, "Ah! I rejoice more in seeing you so truly humble than in all your learning!" His Holiness was still further surprised at his taking no steps to obtain the bulls for his coadjutorship; and when Francis was advised to ask his friends to advance the necessary fees for the purpose, he replied, "No, I will not be a Bishop at other people's expense. If God means me to be one, He will arrange it all without any question of money;" and so it proved; for the Pope gave orders that all the briefs necessary for the purpose should be drawn up and sent to him gratuitously. Soon after this, St. Francis left Rome, stopping on his way home at Loretto, Bologna, and Milan. At the latter place, he met with a MS. copy of the Life of St. Charles, which had just been written (although he was not yet canonized),

and made it his continual study, saying, "that all those who have the cure of souls should know it by heart." The arrangements consequent on the transfer of the ecclesiastical lands, detained him for some little time at Turin; but this being, after some difficulty, satisfactorily arranged, he hastened back to his diocese, where he found the people in great trouble and consternation. In 1601, Henry IV., King of France, had declared war against the Duke of Savoy, and the Genevese and Bernese offered to unite their forces with the King's for the conquest of the Chablais. This would have given occasion to the restoration of heresy throughout the land. St. Francis was therefore sent to the Duke de Nemours, who was at Grenoble, to implore him to interest the King of France in favour of the Catholics, so that nothing might be altered in the existing religion. The Duke de Nemours wrote to Henry IV., who was then at Annecy; but without effect. The venerable Bishop then, overlooking all human considerations, and the possible displeasure of the Duke of Savoy, went himself to the King, who received him with

marked kindness and deference, and listened to his petition, which had been drawn up by St. Francis of Sales. Henry read it carefully through, and then replied, "For the love of God and of our Holy Father the Pope, as well as for your sake, Monsignor, I promise that nothing shall be changed in the position of the Catholic Church in the Chablais; and if need be, I will confirm this promise with my blood." Monsieur Mont Glan had been appointed Governor of the Chablais by the French King, and being a Calvinist, he began by at once appropriating the ecclesiastical revenues, under the plea that as they originally belonged to the Duke of Savoy, they were now justly, therefore, the prey of the French. Francis was, in consequence, sent to the Governor to tell him of the favourable answer of the French King. The Saint started at once; but had scarcely gone a league when he fell into the hands of a body of French troops, who made him prisoner, and carried him to their captain, Captain Vitry. Vitry no sooner found out *who* his prisoner was than he set him at liberty and overwhelmed him with kindness and civility. Francis told

him the nature of his errand, and asked him for letters of recommendation to M. de Mont Glan. Vitry gave them to him with joy, and proposed likewise to introduce him to the King of France; but Francis declined, from fidelity to his lawful sovereign, the Duke of Savoy, with whom the French King was at war. He continued, therefore, his route to the Citadel of Allinges, where he found the Governor, and duly transmitted the letters from the Bishop and Captain Vitry. Mont Glan read the letters and received their bearer with the greatest cordiality. The Saint explained the motive of his journey, and showed the Governor the petition which the King had signed. The Governor replied, that he would in all points conform to the King's wishes, and that, although a Calvinist, he thought the King was right in acting in this manner. He therefore at once restored the benefices which had been appropriated, and further, gave orders that the Protestant ministers belonging to the army should not attempt to propagate their errors among the people.

St. Francis returned joyfully to his flock, whom these assurances comforted and encour-

aged; and, on his way back to Annecy, stopped for a night at his old friends, the De Blonays, where his favourite child Aimée ("La Cadette") was as much rejoiced to see him as before. He spent all his time in strengthening her faith and giving her courage for the future, inspiring her likewise with a horror even of venial sin, which puts a barrier between us and the love of God. Some heretical books had been given to her, which she brought to our Saint to show him. He looked at her tenderly and gravely, and then asked her "if she had read them?" She replied eagerly, "Father, sooner than read anything without your knowledge, and contrary to your will, or to the one Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, I would willingly be burnt with the books,"—a speech to which the Saint years after referred with pleasure in a letter to this very girl, then a religious, who had been tempted and troubled with some doubt as to an article of faith. Henry IV. loyally kept the promise he had made to the Bishop as regarded the Church; and showed so much zeal in propagating the truth that this disastrous war did not in any way affect the interests of religion.

By the good offices of the Pope, a peace was soon after concluded between the King of France and the Duke of Savoy, Cardinal Aldobrandini being employed in the negotiation. This peace was very advantageous to the Chablais, and enabled St. Francis to celebrate a jubilee at Thonon, for which he had obtained a special permission from the Pope, through the intervention of the Princess Margaret, daughter of the Duke of Savoy.

There was a small county, or rather township, called Galliard, close to the gates of Geneva, which was composed of seven or eight parishes, each thickly peopled. The Genevese had retained it after the peace of Vervins; but the treaty of Lyons in 1601 restored it to the Duke of Savoy, who placed there, as governor, a certain Captain Vites de Basterga, a Corsican by birth, and a good and devout Catholic. He likewise forbade the entrance of heretical preachers, and wrote to the Jesuits of Thonon to send over some missionary priests for the celebration of the divine office. The people, whom fear alone had compelled to an outward observance of the Calvinist faith, received the missionaries with

joy, and showed them where they had concealed their crucifixes and the sacred vessels and bells at the time of the heretical invasion of their country. Many of them had always secretly kept up Catholic practices, such as the fasts of the Church, the prayers for the dead, and the sign of the cross. In vain the Calvinist ministers went from house to house, spreading the most odious tales as to the priests and the confessional, and trying to forbid the people from going to communion. In vain a body of heretical soldiers tried on one occasion to guard the church doors, and prevent the ingress of the Catholics: they were simply overpowered by numbers and driven from the place. The Genevese, exasperated by these proceedings, made an inroad into the township, in spite of the treaty, turned out the missionaries, and re-established the Calvinist teachers. But St. Francis no sooner heard of it than he started for Allinges, where Colonel Brotti then commanded, and by his vigorous representations, induced him at once to send down a body of chasseurs to drive the enemy back to their frontiers—a proceeding which was promptly executed

and joyfully hailed by the whole population. Towards the end of the year, the Bishop of Geneva came to Galliard to reconsecrate the churches and altars, and to strengthen the restored faith of the people, who all received him with unbounded demonstrations of filial joy and reverence.

Peace and good order having been now firmly established in the Chablais, Francis was requested to preach the Lent course of sermons at Annecy. In imitation of our Lord and the Baptist, he begged only for a few days' retreat to prepare himself for preaching,—days which he spent entirely in study, penance, and prayer. News was brought him in the middle of it of the dangerous illness of his father, and Francis hurried to the Château de Sales, where he found the old man in a dying state, and instantly devoted himself to the spiritual and physical care of this much-loved parent. After a few days, he appeared to rally, and Francis returned to Annecy, where he preached with such marvellous fruit that the whole city seemed converted at once. On the 5th of April, as the Saint was on the point of entering the pulpit to

preach on the gospel of Lazarus, news was brought him of his father's death, together with an urgent entreaty that he would return home instantly to comfort his mother, and arrange everything for the funeral. Francis had loved his father fondly; but after a burst of natural tears, and an instant of recollection before the altar, he made an offering of his sorrow to God, and mounted the pulpit, preaching with such zeal and perfect calm that no one had an idea of the bad news he had received, till, at the end, he asked the prayers of his audience for the departed, and their consent for him to go and perform the last duties in his power to one he loved so well. Every one was moved to sympathy and admiration at his self-command, and still more, when having devoted the remainder of that Friday and the following day to his home cares, the Sunday following saw him in his usual place, so that not one sermon of the promised course was omitted, Saturday being always a free day.

Soon after Easter, affairs connected with Catholic interests in the French provinces, lately ceded by treaty to Savoy, rendered it

necessary that some one should proceed to Paris to regulate the terms with the French King; and grieved as he was to lose his help, the Bishop saw no one whom he could dispatch on this important mission save Francis of Sales. Provided, therefore, with the necessary patents and letters of introduction, Francis started without delay. In crossing the Saône, which was fearfully rapid and swollen, the ferryboat was nearly lost, and every one present attributed their preservation to the Saint's prayers. He stopped at Dijon, to see his intimate friend the Baron de Luz, whose interest he likewise needed at the French Court; and this apparentlyaccidental visit brought about his acquaintance with Madame de Chantal, and the ultimate founding of the Order of the Visitation, which subsequently produced such great fruits for God's glory. Arrived at Paris, the King received our Saint with great honour, and referred him to Villeroi, the Secretary of State, assuring him that justice should be administered according to his wishes. The Saint asked for two things,—the free exercise of the Catholic faith, now forbidden in the province of Gex,

and the restitution of the Church lands. Villeroi for a long time opposed the plan, but at length yielded, though not without delays, which were very trying to Francis's patience, who longed to return to Annecy. God, however overruled all things for His honour, and Francis's compulsory stay at Paris was attended with the most wonderful results: for being compelled, by the King, to preach before the Court, he did so with such eloquence and power that the most eminent among the Calvinists, both men and women, were converted. One of them exclaimed, "It is no longer the Bishop of Geneva who is addressing us; it is certainly the Holy Ghost speaking through his mouth." Still more wonderful was the effect produced by a funeral oration which he delivered on the occasion of the death of Philip of Lorraine, Duc de Mercœur. This sermon was printed by order of the King, and is a marvel of eloquence and intellectual skill. The whole of Paris, after this, flocked to hear him preach, and endeavoured, by every means in their power, to induce him to remain permanently in France. His noble presence, his charm of

manner, his beautiful voice and choice of language, but above all his burning charity, won the hearts and the souls of the most fastidious of his hearers. One of the Members of Parliament, speaking of his sermons, said, "It cannot be denied that the Coadjutor of Geneva has done great good; but he has also committed one great evil, and which he never can cure. He has destroyed our relish for all other preaching but his own."

Among the many eminent persons with whom he became intimate during this nine months' sojourn in Paris were Peter de Berulle (afterwards Cardinal, and subsequent founder of the first Oratory of Jesus at Paris; as well as the establisher in that city of St. Theresa's Discalced Carmelites), and Mary Acaris, better known by the name of "Mary of the Incarnation," whose confessor and director he became, and of whom the Saint wrote, "This holy soul was a great servant of God; I considered her less as my penitent than as a vessel of election, marked by the Holy Ghost as one chosen for His service. I reproach myself much for not having profited as I ought by her holy conver-

sation." Madame Acaris, on the other hand, looked upon him as an angel from God, and she and Berulle and Andrew Duval, a famous doctor of the Sorbonne, were never weary of talking of him. Berulle used to say that "Francis was a living portrait of the holy Humanity of Jesus Christ, and that he had first taught him how to love the Person of our blessed Lord." Their mutual love was a great help towards the perfection they each attained; and proves how God, when He communicates special gifts to souls, binds them to a sort of dependence upon one another, so that each may profit by the reflex of the other's light. What a lesson does this teach us of the value of a holy friendship!

King Henry became more and more attached to Francis, and more desirous to retain him about his person. When once asked "why he had such an '*engoûment*' for the Bishop of Geneva?" he replied, "I love him because he has never flattered me." There was a gentleman in the Court by the name of Des Hayes, Lord of Montargis, of whom the King was very fond, and one day when they were together,

Henry asked him, "which of the two he loved best, himself or the Bishop?" Des Hayes was puzzled; but finding that the King insisted on a straightforward answer, replied, "that he felt all possible veneration and attachment for the King, but he *loved* the Bishop of Geneva above all men in the world!" The King smiled and said, "Well; I cannot disapprove of your feeling; but only I must beg both you and him to admit me as a third in your great friendship."

The King then tried by the offer of rich bishoprics and large pensions to persuade Francis to give up Geneva; but the Saint always replied, "that he had been called, in spite of himself, to that bishopric, and conceived himself bound, in compliance with his vocation, to remain there to the end of his life; that his own income sufficed for his subsistence, and that more would only be an encumbrance." The favour of the greatest monarch of the age, and the esteem of so many persons of eminent birth and talent did but deepen in our Saint the feelings of humility and self-abasement for which he had ever been so noted. He referred all the glory to God alone, and used to quote the beautiful

words of St. Hugh of Grenoble, "The evils which I commit are real evils, and are truly my own; whereas my good works are neither purely good, nor are they in any way my own."

During this compulsory delay at Paris, the jubilee was celebrated at Thonon; and nothing could be more magnificent or solemn than the processions and services on the occasion, which put the finishing stroke to the work of conversion in the Chablais. The jubilee lasted two months, during which time the concourse never ceased, and some idea of the numbers present may be gathered from the fact that in the official report from the Bishop to the Pope, after the affair was over, the number of communicants was stated to be above *one hundred and sixty-two thousand.* Several of the processions passed through Geneva on their way, with banners and tapers, chanting litanies, till the municipality, frightened at the effect they produced on the people, who thronged to kiss the representations of our Lord, forbade their entrance into the town. The ceremony was begun, as at the centenary jubilees at Rome, by the Bishop, vested ponti-

fically, striking the closed door with a silver hammer, after which a magnificent High Mass was sung, and a picture was blessed of Our Lady of Compassion, for the Church of St. Hippolytus, which was formally annexed to the "Holy House." On the dome, above the high-altar, were engraved, in letters of gold, the words, "Gaude, Maria Virgo; cunctas hæreses sola interemisti in universo mundo." The offerings on this occasion exceeded 20,000 dollars, which, after the expenses of the jubilee had been defrayed, were expended for the benefit of the "Holy House" and the college attached to it.

The day after the conclusion of these august ceremonies, the venerable Bishop was taken ill. From the very first he despaired of life, and begged that he might receive the Viaticum. He had been removed to his nephew's, M. de Chissi's, at the Château de Pollinges, and entreated that St. Francis should be sent for. But soon after the messenger had started, it was evident that his end drew nigh. He begged for Extreme Unction, and expired soon after, on the 17th September, 1602. There was no need for him

to make a will; all he had in the world was sixpence!

Claude de Granier was a man of noble birth, irreproachable life, and great learning. Trained at the Benedictine monastery of Talloire, he took the habit, and dwelt there for several years. Elected Prior, he governed the community with as much love as wisdom; when, to their despair and his own, the Duke of Savoy forced upon him the bishopric of Geneva. He governed that difficult and extensive diocese for twenty-five years, and won the hearts of his flock by devoted charity and indefatigable zeal. Inexorably severe towards himself, he was yet tenderly indulgent to every one else, and especially to the poor, for whom he deprived himself even of the necessaries of life. He never would be dispensed from any of his monastic rules, which he kept strictly till his death. In his latter years, he suffered from a complication of diseases, which only served to show the strength of his faith and patience. His death was looked upon as the greatest calamity in his diocese, and nothing but the holiness of the man whom he had himself chosen as his successor could

have reconciled his sorrowing people to his loss. St. Francis had arrived at Lyons when the sad news reached him; and feeling at once how heavy would be the burden now thrown exclusively on his shoulders, he took refuge in the church, and there pouring out his whole soul to God in prayer and tears, solemnly renewed the consecration of himself, without reserve, to the service of God and to the souls committed to his charge; offering his life in the way most acceptable to the Divine Will. He did this with such fervour and devotion that his face glowed with a supernatural light, which amazed and awed the assistants. Never, in the course of his long and arduous episcopate, did he fail to bear in mind this his solemn vow. Affairs retained him in France for a month longer, so that he was compelled to give up being present at the good Bishop's funeral, which was solemnized at Annecy, in the sanctuary of the Church of St. Francis. As soon as our Saint could leave Lyons, he hastened to the Château de Sales, to make a retreat previous to his ordination. For this purpose he sent for Father Fourier, of the Society of Jesus, with whom he

went through the spiritual exercises for twenty days, combining them with earnest prayer, silence, and the most severe corporal austerities. Although he had never sullied his baptismal innocence by any mortal sin, he bewailed his faults with such bitter tears of contrition that Father Fourier's chief task was to reassure and console him. Under this able director, he drew up a series of rules for his conduct in his new position,—rules which are a model for any bishop,—and which he faithfully followed to his life's end. He was consecrated on the 8th December, 1602, to the joy of his whole flock, and at once commenced that career of indefatigable and penitential labour which was crowned with such marvellous results.

In the following January he went to Gex, to carry out the arrangements agreed upon between him and the French king, for the establishment of the Catholic faith in that province. But the devil, afraid of losing his prey, stirred up the malice of his enemies, who formed a plot to take away his life, and bribed the people with whom he lodged to give him a poisoned cup. Our Saint was saved, like St. Benedict, by mak-

ing the sign of the cross over the goblet, which instantly split in pieces, and the contents were spilled on the ground. As a thanksgiving for this deliverance, he made a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Compassion, going on foot from Annecy to Thonon, although the heat was at that time extreme. He was received with intense joy by his old children, who came out to meet him with banners in procession, and whose faith he everywhere strengthened and confirmed. He drew up the rules and constitutions of the "Holy House," or "Sainte Maison," as it was called, giving up his post as Prior, but promising to devote himself heart and soul to the welfare of the congregation. He everywhere restored the ruined churches, built schools, and went from village to village, preaching, consecrating, and confirming. On one occasion, when he was consecrating a cemetery in one of the suburbs of the town, a violent storm of wind and rain and hail, accompanied with thunder and lightning, came on, by which every one seemed likely to be drenched, upon which some Protestants in the crowd cried out, "See how God punishes the Papists." St. Francis replied,

"You are mistaken, my friends. It is the malice of the devil, who cannot bear to see himself driven away by the power of the Holy Spirit." Then kneeling down, he conjured our Lord to make the storm to cease, which it suddenly did, and the sky became at once blue and clear.

It was about this time that he wrote a letter to the Pope, Clement VIII., dated the 15th of November, 1603, giving a summary of the conversion of the Chablais, with which notice we will conclude:—

"To give an account, in as few words as possible, to your Holiness of the great work which has been accomplished here, I should state that it is only twelve years ago that in the sixty-five parishes adjoining the town of Geneva, the Calvinist heresy was the established religion, and publicly taught in all schools and colleges; whereas there was no place where the rites of the Catholic Church could be solemnized, and any one returning to the old faith was subject to grievous persecution, loss of goods and land, and even death itself. But now the Church has spread her branches everywhere, and taken

such strong root that heresy is completely banished, and that it is as difficult now to find fifty Calvinists as it formerly was to find fifty Catholics. Everywhere the Holy Sacrifice is daily offered. Each parish has its priest and church and school; and it is the same with those townships which, by the treaty of peace, have lately been made over to the Duke of Savoy. They have all returned in a body to the bosom of the Church; and what is remarkable is, that the people themselves have kept firmly to their faith, without being shaken either by persecution or menaces during the temporary occupation of their country by the enemy; and thus the diocese, so far from suffering in these disastrous wars, has reaped nothing but good, from the strengthening and confirming of our people in the Catholic Church, and the entire destruction of heresy and schism."

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